



THE INDEPENDENT

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WEATHER: Sunny, part, rain, cloudy, later

WEEKEND 40p

Yes, the answer to the universe really is 42

Charles Arthur

Science Editor

It seems that Douglas Adams was right after all: the answer to the Life, the Universe and everything, is 42.

Cambridge astronomers have found that 42 is the value of an essential scientific constant – one which determines the age of the universe.

In his novel, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Mr Adams describes how an alien race programs a com-

puter called Deep Thought to provide the ultimate answer to "Life, the Universe and Everything". After seven and a half million years of calculation, back came the answer – 42.

In slightly less time – two years – a team at the Cavendish Laboratory has managed the same feat, using a new technique to estimate the value of the "Hubble Constant". This measures how quickly objects in the universe are receding from each other – a natural outcome of the Big Bang that cre-

ated the universe. Dr Richard Saunders, who led the research, sounded a trifle sheepish by the result. "We have taken two measurements for the constant, and the average of them is, well, it's 42," he said. But he insisted that is "entirely fortuitous" – though thousands of fans of the *Hitchhiker* novels might disagree.

Mr Adams said yesterday that when he wrote the novel 20 years ago he chose the number especially for its aesthetic nature. "I wanted a nice, ordi-

nary number, one that you wouldn't mind taking home and introducing to your parents."

But later he realised that the choice was no accident: in 1972, when he was working for John Cleese's film company, Video Arts, as a "prop borrower", he and the other writers picked 42 for its amusing qualities as the punchline in the closing scene.

The Hubble Constant indicates the age of the universe because if we know

how quickly everything is flying apart, we can work out how long ago it was all together at the same point – like working out how long a film has been running by measuring the film and knowing how many frames per second it shows.

Astronomers have bickered for decades about the constant's value, calculating it to be anywhere between 20 and 80. But large values imply that the universe is younger than its oldest stars – a logical conundrum which

the new value avoids, said Dr Saunders, as it puts the universe's age at about 16 billion years.

The Cambridge team produced the measurement by combining data from X-ray telescopes with information about cosmic background radiation, leftover energy in space from Big Bang. Dr Saunders insists future revisions will alter the value of the constant from its present, vagrant value. That would suit Mr Adams: "It does come up awfully often," he said.

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Carnaby Street Catholic 'cult' sold for £90m

Carnaby Street, the mecca of fashion, music and culture in London's swinging Sixties, has been sold for £90m.

The area, which is now a mainly a haunt for foreign tourists, has been bought by the property company, Shaftesbury, from the Dutch company, Wereldhavve.

The area in and around Carnaby Street include shops and studios but in the 1960s it was home to men's fashion boutiques in an era when acceptable dress included pink frilly shirts and crushed velvet jackets.

The Carnaby Estate will join the 120 shops and restaurants the company already owns in central London.

Dorrell targets council care homes

The Government is expected to propose far-reaching reforms to end local authority ownership of homes for children and the elderly.

Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health, is to propose in a White Paper in February that the homes should be taken over by a separate agency, with the local authorities left to "purchase" of care of the elderly and children.

Whitehall sources stressed it would not mean closing down homes with the loss of thousands of jobs, but those working in such homes will be concerned. *Colin Brown*

Medals for Bosnia braves

A 19-year-old private who fired back at Serb troops to help his colleagues find cover has become the youngest British soldier ever to be mentioned for bravery in dispatches. The gallantry award for Mathew Mitchell, of the 2nd Battalion the Light Infantry, was one of several for service in Bosnia announced last night.

The highest award – the Air Force Cross – went to an army pilot who was flying a Navy helicopter. Squadron Major David Meyer, 34, won his award for landing a bomb disposal party in the middle of a minefield "in appalling and hazardous conditions" on 28 January after a Spartan armoured troop carrier was destroyed by a mine.

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Tonsorially challenged reach for the roots

Sex and authenticity, that's what I was looking for yesterday. The allegation that the Bishop of Sedgefield had been receiving counselling for an insincere haircut, and was failing to "connect" with women voters, has sent shock-waves reverberating around the House. "If Beauty Blair isn't doing it for women", the unspoken thought has run, "then what chance have I got?" So, had bouffant hairdos been chopped overnight? Would Michael Portillo next be seen with a Delpierre shag-cut, five o'clock shadow and a Gauloise hanging from his lower lip? Were we to be treated to a series of junior ministers making tearful speeches about their relation-



DAVID AARONOVITCH

ships with their mothers? Well, the first thing I saw as I sat in the gallery was Derek Conway (Con, Shrewsbury and Atcham), standing there at the Bar of the House, wearing a frock-coat and clutching what appeared to be a billiard cue. Was this not taking authenticity a little too far, I wondered aloud to my neighbour – could

Conway not have left the cue at the pub? No, it was explained to me patiently, Mr Conway (a government whip) is Vice-Chamberlain to Her Majesty's Household, and that is his staff of office. Once a week he reports to the Queen on happenings in Parliament, and then comes back and stands there, anyway?

By now it was time for Home Office questions, and I examined all on view purely in terms of their physical appeal for one section of the electorate or another. Down whose spine does Michael Howard send a delicious shiver?

Who goes to WH Smith and asks for posters of Jack Straw to decorate their bedrooms? Is there a section of our diffuse

population with the specialist tastes necessary for a proper appreciation of Anne Widdecombe? How many PVC fetishists are there out there, anyway?

Peter Griffiths (Con Portsmouth North) had his eyes on minorities when he argued for those who "shoot with muzzle-loading, flint-lock or match-lock pistols" not to be penalised by the new firearms Bill.

So if anyone you know is killed in a duel this year, blame Peter. The buxom Brummie Conservative Dame Jill Knight, defended Freemasons from

Labour, arguing that "what a gentleman chooses to do in his spare time is unimportant". Particularly if one trouser leg is

rolled up, and one nipple exposed. It was all very stuff, by Commons standards, but nothing to what came later in Prime Minister's Question Time.

With John Major away in Bordeaux (the place for aromatherapy), and Tony off getting a facial (Clarins please, the others bring me out in spots), it was Herza versus Prezza.

Theoretically the Deputy Prime Minister – whose hair is not so much bouffant as expedient – should be doing badly in the sex stakes.

Few can possibly take so much trouble as he does. But it is all theatrical overstatement, natural – childlike almost – in its silliness.

The de-bouffant Mr Prescott,

Sign of the times as Fergie saga fails to titillate readers

Clare Gander

The foreigners ignored it; the British deplored it. *Newly Bumby* gave it the thumbs-up but few others found a kind word.

Hardback copies of *Fergie: Her Secret Life* hit bookshelves yesterday amid a spectacularly damp-squib author-signing session. "The Book She Tried To Ban" looked set to become "The Book He Failed To Sell", as customers turned their backs on Allan Starkie's "sensational" revelations.

"I've got other things to study," said Nerita Pinto, a Portuguese student, as she left Oxford Street's Dillons with an English dictionary. A passer-by, Peter Mayberry, said: "I'm an Australian and I'm not very interested in the lady."

The book, published by Michael O'Mara, who also bought Andrew Morton's *Diana: Her True Story*, charts the Duchess of York's relationship with her financial adviser, John Bryan, with descriptions of her sexual preferences.

Marguerite Horner was in two minds. Should she buy a signed copy for a friend's 50th birthday? "It's not so much the money, but whether it's rubbish," mused the mother of four. "It's very sunnily written. It's not something you'd want to admit to buying. It's so tacky. You know, it's so destructive, the whole thing."

In minutes, the book had become a symbol of society to Miss Horner. "It's all part of the moral decay. Everyone thinks they have a right to know what everyone else is doing. No, I won't buy it. I've talked myself out of it." Her friend would be getting a tie instead.

There were, however, two takers. Richard Kay, the *Daily Mail*'s royal reporter, explained: "It's a gift". And Nicole Linay, 25, said she couldn't wait to "get divvuled". "Ah, I didn't know they had colour pictures," she said, skimming her copy. "Let's face it, everyone likes a scandal. It intrigues us."

Meanwhile, the 39-year-old New Yorker who was once the Duchess's confidante defended his work. "It wasn't money, nor revenge, rather an act of confession".

"Sometimes you have to bring your own case to the courts of humanity and see what they think. I absolutely don't think I am guilty of grubby conduct. No, I don't feel I've betrayed her. I don't want to say I've done her a great favour either. I think I've given her a fair shot."

Mr Starkie has been mauled from all quarters. His first "fan mail" dropped on his doorstep yesterday. "It was from a woman who said I should be shot," he said cheerfully. But he always has his mum. "She's a mother. She's proud of me."



Enjoyable read: A copy of Allan Starkie's biography 'Fergie: Her Secret Life' at its launch yesterday

Photograph: Tony Buckingham

Prison Service owns up to blunders over coach escape

Ian Burrell

The Prison Service last night admitted that a series of embarrassing blunders had allowed six highly dangerous prisoners to escape from a prison escort this week.

Three of the men, who have all been convicted of robbery, had previously mounted successful escapes.

The prisoners were transferred on a private coach with

a private driver because no prison vehicles were available.

The coach broke down two miles from Blundeston prison in Suffolk, from where 10 inmates were being transferred to jails in London. Six of the most violent men were allowed to continue their journey in a second coach accompanied by only five prison officers. Normally a dozen officers would guard six violent inmates.

During the wait for a re-

placement vehicle, one prisoner taught the others how to slip their handcuffs by dislocating their thumbs.

The officers, who did not know that some of the prisoners had previously been escapees, were overpowered and badly beaten.

The prisoners then seized their personal prison files which were being transferred with them on the coach. They ripped the papers up and threw them

out of the windows. They then changed into their own civilian clothing which the prison authorities had allowed on to the coach as part of the prisoners' personal possessions.

After taking control of the coach on the M25, they ordered the driver to go to the Archway area of north London where they made their escapes.

Among those at large are Lee Mitty, serving 11 years for robbery, who absconded from Lit-

Irish minister urged to quit over release of IRA remand suspects

Alan Murdoch

Dublin

Ireland's justice minister Nora Owen was last night resisting Opposition calls for her resignation after a number of alleged Republican paramilitary remand prisoners had to be released in the Circuit Court, not informed of the decision. It was after this that the orders which were subsequently ruled ultra vires.

Fifteen prisoners, including 13 from Portlaoise Prison where many IRA inmates are held, had to be freed early on Wednesday morning, after legal advice indicated that detention orders made by the non-jury Special Criminal Court were flawed.

Those brought back to the Special Criminal Court yesterday to receive remand decisions renewing their custody were five Londoners men facing arms charges following last week's

discovery of a primed IRA mortar near Malin Head in Donegal.

Others involved are IRA suspect detained after the discovery of a County Laois bomb factory in June. Lawyers for the prisoners were last night seeking to challenge their continued detention.

A sixteenth man was yesterday released and re-arrested for the same reasons. Five others on bail may have their cases reassessed.

In the Dail Mrs Owen was unable to say exactly what her department failed to inform Judge Lynch that his request to step down had been approved. She said a letter from the Attorney-General warning her of the problem had not been brought to her attention.

She promised a "full, speedy and impartial inquiry" by outside officials, and denied it was a resignation matter.

The main Opposition Fianna Fail party's justice spokesman, John O'Donoghue said: "This would be a joke in a banana republic, and it's a joke in this republic. Someone is going to have to pay for it."

He urged her to "do the honourable thing and resign".

Fianna Fail leader Bertie Ahern asked how the minister could have remained in the dark as it appeared the judge's prediction had been known to the Attorney-General in September.

The minister had said she was not alerted and the letter to

Judge Lynch not finalised until Wednesday this week.

The Prison Service said: "There were tensions inside Blundeston that led to these prisoners being moved."

Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said: "Public safety has clearly been compromised."

"This is another catastrophic blunder which should never have happened."

"There needs to be an inquiry into why a commercial bus was used to transfer six armed robbers, three of whom had previously escaped."

Bev Lord, vice-chairman of the Prison Officers' Association, said: "These prisoners had already demonstrated their propensity to violence and the lives of the prison officers were unreasonably put at risk."

Spring tells Major to resist Unionist election threat

Colin Brown

Chief Political Correspondent

The Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring yesterday said John Major would be "big enough" to pursue the peace process – and resist any Unionist threat to bring the Government down by provoking an early general election.

His remarks touched on raw Tory nerves and are certain to anger some Tory MPs by appearing to engage in domestic party politics on his flying visit to London.

There is a growing fear among senior Tory politicians who are close to the Unionists that, rather than wait until next

May, Mr Trimble will withdraw his support for the Government and trigger a general election in February to underline his party's importance.

The Unionists could become pivotal in the New Year, if the Tories lose their majority after the Wirral South by-election, following the death of Tory MP Barry Porter.

Speculation about bringing down the Government is rejected by Mr Trimble, but at a press conference at the Irish Embassy in London, Mr Spring was less dismissive.

There was no suggestion, he said, that the changes in the

Clinton administration after the re-election of the President would lead to the recall of Senator George Mitchell, who has acted as chairman for the talks.

Mr Spring made it clear he wants progress in the talks, but Sinn Fein must be part of any final settlement. He said: "Sinn Fein don't have a veto. They are not going to stop the talks. I have no difficulty in seeking a momentum in the talks which has not been there."

"Notwithstanding that, we have an obligation to those who support constitutional parties to see if we can bring about

an agreement between Nationalism and Unionism. The ideal is to stop the violence."

Mr Spring, who is in the centre of European moves to broker peace talks in the Middle East, said he had no indications – in spite of speculation of a secret IRA convention at the weekend – that there would be a ceasefire called before the general election.

"If we are going to have the ultimate accommodation, it is going to require all parties sitting around the table," he said.

"It would be in everybody's interests to have the talks as

His reputation goes before him. Alison Graham thinks it's unjust. Find out why in this week's Radio Times.

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Irresistible charm of five girls and the biggest turn-on of all

Steve Boggan

Last night, five women performed a task reserved each year for statesmen, Oscar winners and the regulars of celebrity gossip columns, yet only a few months they were unknown.

The Spice Girls switched on the Christmas lights in London's Oxford Street, the latest piece of exposure in a collective existence spanning less than six months to the public consciousness. If you admit you don't know who they are, your tabloid-reading friends will ask what planet you have been on, but don't be too hard on yourself. In the context of this particular rise, to say "meteoric" would be an understatement.

The exact provenance of the Spice Girls remains unclear. What is indisputable is that their first record, "Wannabe", is at number one in the charts of 27 countries, that it sold 1.25 million copies in the United Kingdom alone and that it stayed at number one here for seven weeks. Their second sin-

gle, "Say You'll Be There", went straight in at number one and sold 750,000 copies in two weeks and their debut album, Spice, is at number one in Japan and will, without any doubt, go straight to number one when it is released here next week.

What has the music industry in such a sweat over the five women - ranging in ages from 18 to 24 - is that they have succeeded at all. All-girl British groups, apart from the one memorable exception, Bananarama, have always struggled. Five all-singing, all-dancing women were not supposed to be a success - the music press said so when "Wannabe" was released - so what went right?

The secret appears to stem from the fact that these are no-puppet airheads. These are feisty women whose sex appeal strikes a chord with teenage boys and men, and whose attitude earns the admiration of young girls and adoring female adolescents.

They claim not to have been put together like their male counterparts in *Hits That Or-*



Pop sensation: Music industry insiders say the Spice Girls' success is firmly based on a broad appeal - and hard work

The Monkees, yet the line-up is suspiciously eclectic.

There is Geri Halliwell, a 24-year-old former Katherine Hamnett model from Watford (the smart one); Melanie Brown, 21 from Leeds, a kickboxer with a pierced tongue (the tough one); Melanie Chisholm, 20, from Liverpool, who loves football (the tomboy); Victoria Adams, 21, who still lives with

her parents and wears stylish clothes (the sophisticated one); and Emma Lee Bunton, 18, from north London, who turns her back on the harder side of the band (the fluffy one).

If you believe their record company, Virgin, the women, who all wanted to be actresses, kept bumping into each other on the television and film audition circuit. They liked each

other, decided to share a house together in Maidenhead, Berkshire, to save money, and began writing songs.

If you believe the more sceptical members of the music business, they were brought together as the result of an ad placed in *The Stage* by a mystery pop Svengali who was pushed aside when the five decided they no longer needed him. Either

version ultimately lends itself to the view that they, and not executives, are calling the shots.

"No one really knows for sure how they came together, but they were pushing themselves for a long time," said Selina Webb, managing editor of *Music Week*. "They would keep appearing at industry parties and people kept saying: 'Who are those girls?'

Muff Fitzgerald, their spokesman at Virgin, said the band independently ap-

proached Simon Fuller, who manages Annie Lennox.

"They went to Simon because they respected Annie and he was simply bowled over by their music," he said. "The whole thing about being put together by someone is just a myth perpetuated by the music press."

"They are pulling the strings here, and that makes some people uncomfortable,"

Holiday firms face monopolies probe

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

A monopolies inquiry was launched yesterday into the £7bn a year holiday industry to answer allegations that large integrated groups such as Thomson and Airtours were not in the consumers' interest.

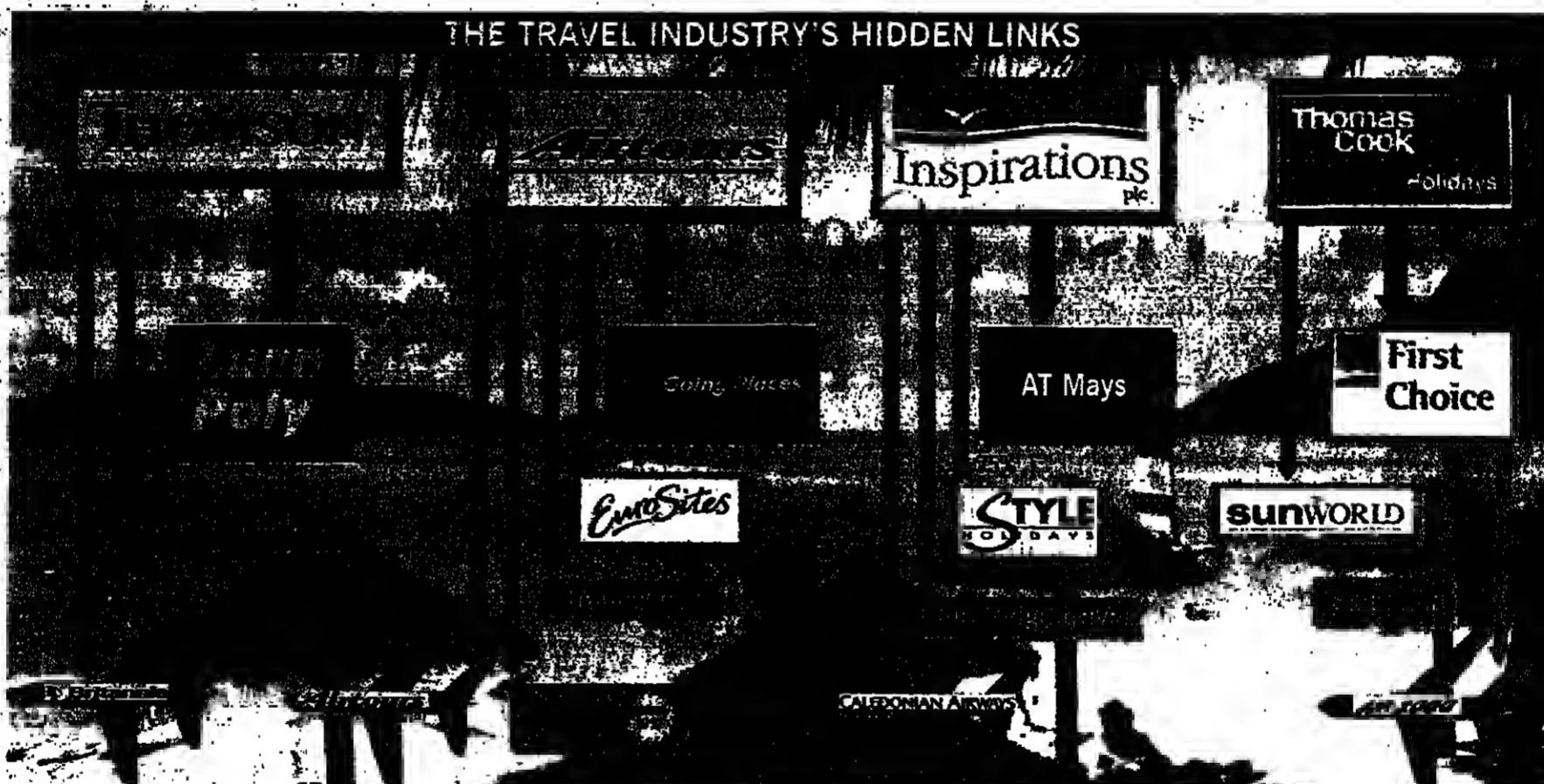
John Bridgeman, director-general of the Office of Fair Trading, said he was concerned that consumers were unaware that the largest travel agents were owned by tour operators. He believed this vertical integration allowed the tour companies unfairly to push their own holidays at unwitting customers.

The wide-ranging monopolies probe will also investigate the OFT's concerns that tour operators are only offering discounts to holidaymakers who take out specific travel insurance deals from which they profit and which may be too expensive or unsuitable for the consumer.

The Monopolies & Mergers Commission, which will conduct the probe on behalf of the OFT, will also look into the way travel agents commonly use a dispute over commission terms as a pretext for taking their competitors brochures off their racks during prime selling periods.

Mr Bridgeman said: "The two leading travel companies with whom I have had discussions have argued that such practices are a reflection of the competition that prevails in the travel trade. My view is that they can distort the competition process."

He added that he had failed in a bid to get the travel trade's two biggest companies, Thomson and Airtours, to agree to undertakings to



make the industry more transparent: "I need to have acceptable undertakings from all parties involved. It has become clear after many weeks of discussions with Thomson and Airtours that this is not going to be possible."

Airtours said yesterday it had been prepared to give undertakings that it would make its ownership of travel agent Going Places clear; that it would not take rivals brochures off its shelves; and that it

would not abuse its market power to impose unfair terms on small independent travel agents or tour operators.

The OFT's bid to avoid a monopoly reference failed, however, be-

cause Thomson, the market leader and owner of the Lunn Poly chain of travel agents, refused to give any ground - claiming the undertakings represented an unacceptable infringement of its commercial freedom.

Both

Airtours and Thomson put a brave face on the inquiry yesterday. Thomson, which sells 30 per cent of the UK's 8.5 million package holidays a year and runs 800 Lunn Poly agents, said there were now more

high-street travel agents than there were five years ago, and said the market share of the top five tour operators had declined over the past seven years.

Airtours finance director Harry Coe added: "We welcome the investigation. We are confident that any detailed investigation will be unable to find evidence of anything other than a highly competitive industry that has given good value to consumers." Airtours is number two to Thomson in package holidays and has 700 Going Places outlets.

Mr Coe said the price of holidays had fallen by between 15 and 20 per cent in inflation-adjusted terms over the past 10 years and as a result the size of the holiday market had grown enormously. "It is just not an anti-competitive industry."

Despite the companies' confidence in the outcome of the inquiry, which could take 12 months, shares in the publicly-quoted holiday groups fell sharply yesterday in the City. Airtours' shares tumbled from 71.3p to 64.4p while Inspirations ended 10p lower at 82.5p.

Independent travel agents and Labour, however, were delighted by the decision.

Nigel Griffiths, shadow consumer minister, said: "This is long overdue and vindicates all our complaints. It could finally mean the end of the stranglehold imposed by the giants of the industry. We need to stop compulsory add-ons like insurance agreements that customers have to take out when they book a holiday. If the big firms have been so reluctant to concede on this issue it indicates that they are making a killing out of them."



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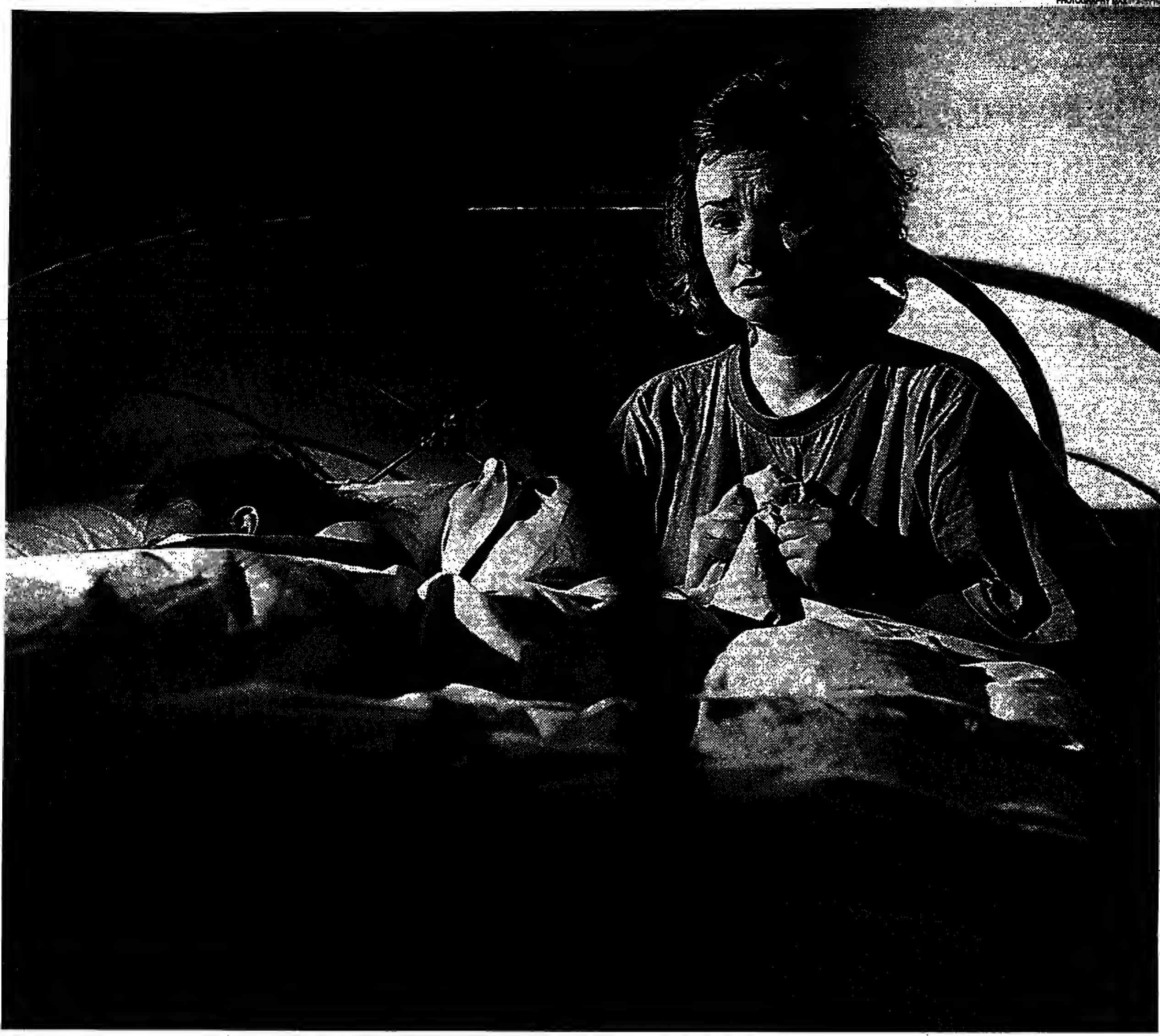
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BBC under fire for viewers' charter

Matthew Horsman
Media Editor

ITV and Channel 4 last night said the BBC should withdraw its *Statement of Promises*, published with great fanfare on Tuesday, until misrepresentations and inaccuracies were removed from the 50-page "viewers' charter".

The broadcasters are licensed by a list of programme genres included with the document, which appears to suggest that ITV transmits no peak-time factual programming and that Channel 4 offers no contemporary music, natural history or religious programming in the hours between 6.30pm and 10.30pm.

"The BBC promised to be accurate and impartial, but this is a highly partial piece of selectivity," said Michael Grade, chief executive of Channel 4 last

night. "I am very sorry that the people who compiled this do not watch television."

According to the list, which appears on page 7 of the BBC's *Statement of Promises to Viewers and Listeners*, only the BBC1, BBC2 and Channel 4 broadcast current affairs programming at peak times. Barry Cox, director of the ITV Association, said last night: "I find it mystifying that the BBC should have missed *World in Action*, which has been on since the 1960s, and the *Big Story*. He added that the ITV companies would be writing to the BBC to complain about the matter.

Mr Grade said he too would be writing to the BBC about the claims. "They say we have no religious programming in peak-time – but what about *Witness*, or the *History of the Church of England*?" And about suggestions that Channel 4 did not

broadcast on-saturation comedy in peak, Mr Grade said: "What about *Rory Bremner* or *Jo Brand*?"

A BBC spokesman said last night that the list had been based on figures compiled by Bart, the industry standard. "We should have stated that broadcasters have to have 34 minutes a week, each week of the year, in order to qualify," the spokesman added.

"That is completely selective," Mr Grade responded. "But even so, they should have stated it. I think this whole document ought to be shredded, and they should start again. It certainly cast doubt on all the other figures in the [statement]."

They promised in this document that if they made a mistake, they would admit it clearly and frankly, say how it happened, and say what they

would do to correct it. I think they should stick to their promise."

The Independent Television Commission, which regulates the commercial TV sector, was also understood to be concerned about the document, believing it to be a misrepresentation of the breadth of commercial terrestrial services in the UK.

The *Statement of Promises* marked the BBC's most public attempt yet to convince licence-payers that it provided value for money, and its publication coincided with the current campaign for a higher licence fee. The corporation had said it would send out 10 million leaflets offering copies to interested viewers. Revising and reprinting the document would add to the already high cost – nearly £200,000 – of preparation and publishing the statement.

Loophole delay 'has stopped students voting'

Ian Burrell

A political row broke out last night over a legal loophole which may have prevented thousands of young people from registering to vote in the general election.

The controversy follows a decision by Peter Lilley, the social security secretary, finally to order a change in the law to exempt students from payment of council tax.

The legal loophole – which made students liable to payment of council tax if they shared a property with someone on income support – is believed to have dissuaded large numbers of students from registering to vote.

Labour MPs accused the Government of deliberately delaying the changes in order to dissuade students from registering to vote in time for the election. The Government has been aware of the loophole more than a year but the change in legislation will not be introduced until next April.

Rhodri Morgan, MP for Cardiff West, accused the Government of being "anti-democratic". He had first raised the issue with ministers in August 1995, and: "Unless this is inexcusable toeing-out within the government machine I see no other reason for the delay other than an attempt to depress the number of under-25s who can vote at the next election." The *Independent* revealed

yesterday that nearly 2 million people who are eligible to vote are missing from the electoral roll.

The problem has been exacerbated by the increased mobility of young people with the rise in the student population which now stands at 3 million.

The row came as the National Union of Students prepared to launch a national campaign to get students to register to vote.

Later this month, student parties will be held across Britain in support of Rock the Vote, a celebrity-endorsed campaign which aims to redress the political apathy among under-25s.

Douglas Trainer, president of the NUS, said the council-tax anomaly particularly affected households where unemployed graduates on income support shared with undergraduates.

"We are unconvinced that it is just a coincidence that this change will not take effect until it is too late for these people to be involved in the general election," he said. "We are staggered that this has taken so long."

The change in the law was announced in the House of Commons on Wednesday after a planted question by David Evans, Tory MP for Weymouth and Portland. In response, David Curry, the Environment Minister, described the current situation as an "anomaly", and said it would be ended "as soon as we have an opportunity" to amend primary legislation.

Liz Hunt
Health Editor

Dr Knols says that medical entomologists are now buying Limburger cheese and taking it to mosquito-infested areas around the globe, while his own team are working on a mosquito trap baited with fatty acids.

The scientists say that Limburger cheese may help to develop a "mosquito trap" using the cheese-based bait to lure the malaria-carrying insects away from potential human victims.

They have discovered that the African mosquito is particularly attracted to the smell of human feet, and conceivably to its biting activity on the victim's exposed ankles and feet.

Dr Bart Knols, a Dutch medical entomologist working in Tanzania, and colleagues found that Limburger cheese, well-known for its smelly-fatty odour, was also attractive to Anopheles gambiae.

Writing in tomorrow's issue of *The Lancet*, Dr Knols says that the bacterium which is used in the production of the cheese belongs to the same genus as a micro-organism which lives between the toes on human feet.

"Ripening of Limburger cheese occurs at 32-34°C in a humid environment resembling the micro-habitat of the toe cleft, and microbial action probably results in identical odours," Dr Knols writes.

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politics

Workfare scheme will target dole cheats

Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

The Government is to spend £100m on a big extension of a "workfare"-style scheme partly aimed at getting dole "cheats" off the unemployment register.

Announcing the project, which will affect more than 100,000 long-term unemployed, Gillian Shephard, Secretary of State of Education and Em-

ployment, said the programme would also give genuinely unemployed people a new purpose in life and help them back into the labour market.

She said the two existing "project work" pilot schemes in the mid-Kent and Hull areas were to be extended in the new year to another 29 districts from Swansea to Dundee. The new trials will cover almost one-third of all 18- to 49-year-olds

in Britain who have been out of work for two years or more.

The programme aims at giving the long-term jobless work which is useful to the community in return for their unemployment benefit plus £10. Those who refuse to participate in the initiative, which involves 13 weeks of job searching, followed by 13 weeks of compulsory work, face reductions in payments from the state.

Mrs Shephard said the pilot schemes had been extremely successful. Some 25 per cent more people were leaving the unemployment register than in comparable groups elsewhere.

The extension of the trials was good news for people who were genuinely seeking work and had been unemployed for a long time. "If other people who have been claiming fraudulently are encouraged to leave

the unemployment register that is good news for the taxpayer."

She was joined at the launch by the deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, who said the long-term unemployed fell into three groups. The first, for whom he had "nothing but sympathy", were those who didn't have the literary and numerical skills to hold down a job. The second were those who were "dispirited" and had lost the will

to keep searching, but were perfectly capable of holding down a job. The last category, with whom he had "no sympathy whatsoever" were people working in the black economy.

Project work was useful in such cases, he said, because it prevented them working and claiming benefit at the same time. The initial trials had shown that fraudsters signed off the unemployment register "in

large numbers very quickly". Such people had been cheating the taxpayer, he said. All the evidence was that the schemes were of considerable benefit to the taxpayer and to the Exchequer and that the programmes paid for themselves.

Labour's employment spokesman, David Blunkett, said: "The Government is simply trying to keep the dole figures down without making any real contribution to getting people into lasting work."

Gillian Shephard's claims for the original pilots are fraudulent – indeed she had to admit that only one in ten of those involved had got jobs – and she lost track of where many of the others had gone...

"It is replacing the abandoned Community Action Programme which promised 40,000 jobs, but never delivered."

Sir James suffers EU blow

John Rentoul
Political Correspondent

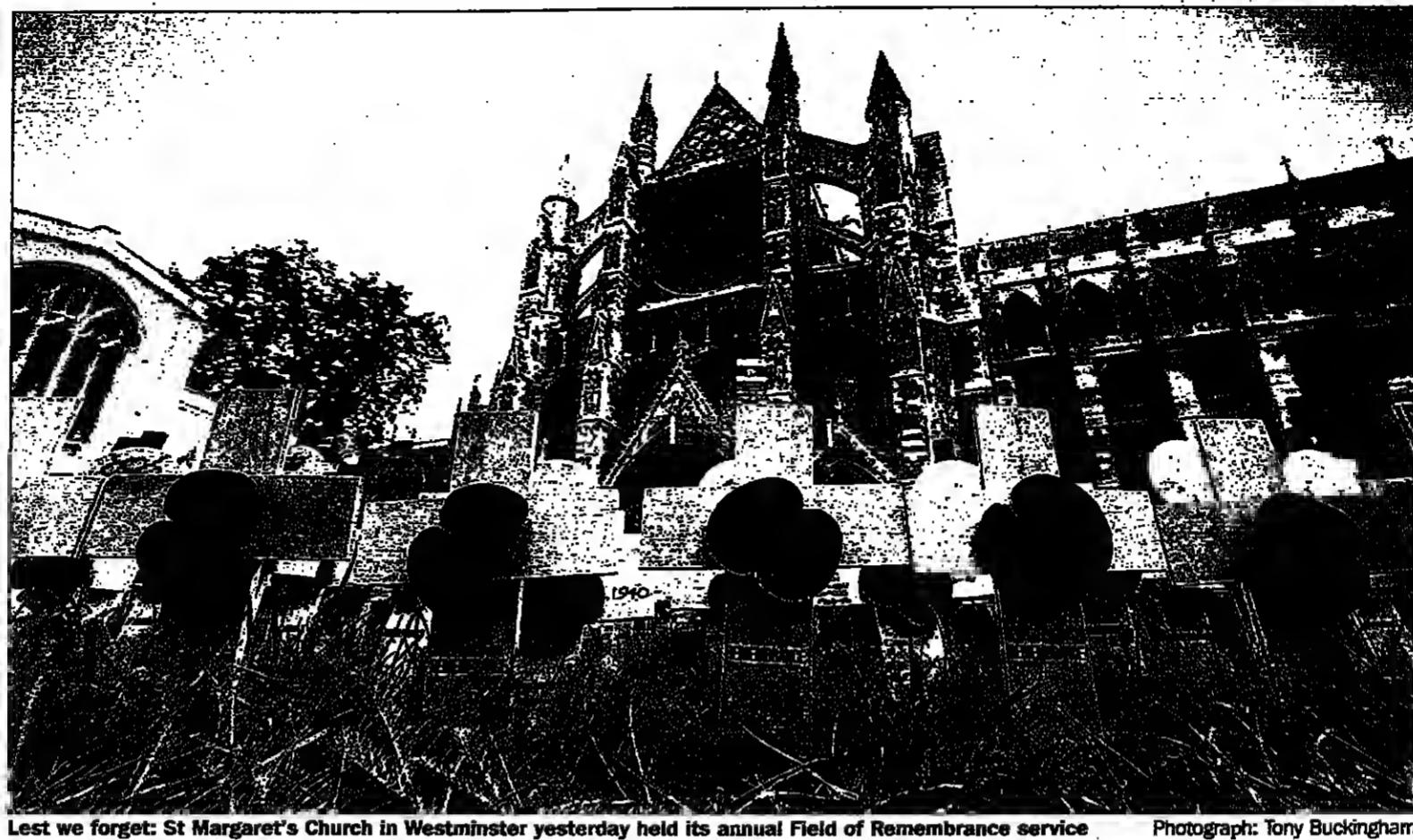
Sir James Goldsmith's Europe-wide party collapsed yesterday in a humiliating setback for the tycoon's campaign against the present constitution of the European Union.

Sir James, who is a French MEP, was leader of the "Europe of Nations" group in the European Parliament, which was forced to dissolve after the defection of Anne-Christine Poirson, another French member. This reduced the group to 17. It needs 18 members to qualify as an official group, entitled to office space, committee seats

The folding of the group is an embarrassment to Sir James, who has pledged to spend up to £20m fielding candidates in the British general election, with the single demand for a referendum on EU membership.

This week, he repeated his determination to match the spending of the two main parties in the election. But inquiries about the nature of the "family charitable trust" which he said would pay for the campaign produced little information.

Sir James's lawyers confirmed to *The Independent* that the Goldsmith Foundation for European Affairs is a "private charitable foundation established overseas", adding that, "as such, it does not have any UK charitable status". A British charity would be unable to fund political activity.



Lest we forget: St Margaret's Church in Westminster yesterday held its annual Field of Remembrance service. Photograph: Tony Buckingham

Defiance on working time evaporates

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Hardline Tory talk that ministers would openly defy the European Court and refuse to implement the 48-hour week working time directive, was repudiated by a senior Government source last night.

The Independent reported last month that there would be swift implementation of the directive if, as expected, the European Court upheld it in a

formal judgment on Tuesday – but Conservative sources were quick to deny that, with talk of open defiance.

An authoritative source confirmed last night that if the court upheld the directive, ministers would act quickly to consult business and industry before preparing and tabling legislation to enact the new law. However, he said there was no question of defying the law as laid down by the court, and there would be no "foot-dragging".

Stephen Byers, a Labour employment spokesman, told *The Independent*: "We will apply Article 18 because it gives flexibility to both employers and employees who will be given the opportunity of choosing whether or not they wish to work in excess of 48 hours."

Under the provisions of the article, there was no question of employees being sacked, or penalised, for refusing to work more than a 48-hour week.

One of the country's largest unions for skilled and white-collar workers yesterday urged both public sector organisations and privatised companies to negotiate a flexible approach to the working time directive or face the threat of legal action, writes **BARRY CLEMENT**.

The Manufacturing Science

Finance union contends that all "elements of the state", which includes enterprises sold off by the Government, will be the subject of the new European law from 23 November and that employees could take court proceedings if management refuses to implement the provisions of the directive.

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US hired guns join British election shoot-out

Britain's election is becoming more Presidential than ever, writes John Rentoul



There are also pointers to further internal reforms of the Labour Party, with some of Mr Blair's supporters openly advocating turning the party conference into a "showcase" for the party rather than a policy-making body.

Labour should learn from the "poll lift" which successful conventions gave the Republicans and then the Democrats this summer in America," says a blueprint drawn up by the "moderniser" faction, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee.

The Conservatives are learning from America too. Although their flirtation with the psychological system of Dick Wirthlin, Ronald Reagan's public relations guru, was an expensive failure, costing over £1m in the dying days of Margaret Thatcher's premiership, they have maintained contacts with Republican advisers.

After the Republican landslide in the 1994 mid-term elections, Newt Gingrich's pollster and adviser Frank Luntz visited London and met Cabinet ministers Stephen Dorrell and Michael Portillo.

The visit was arranged by Danny Finkelstein at the Social Market Foundation, and something of an American politics addict who is now head of research at Tory Central Office.

Mr Finkelstein has long drawn political lessons from America. And, although the "New Labour, New Danger" was rubbishished by his favoured Republican contacts, the lesson he draws from the American election is that incumbency and the economy are the Tories' key advantages.

The election campaign teams of both main parties have long had close links with their US counterparts and with Washington political consultants, the "hired guns" of American politics.

The Conservative and Labour backroom teams are already running a "long campaign" for the next general election which is more like an American presidential race than ever before.

Labour's campaign headquarters, run by Tony Blair's closest aide Peter Mandelson in Millbank Tower just up the Thames from the Palace of Westminster, is explicitly modelled on the Clinton campaign "war room" of his first presidential victory four years ago.

George Stephanopoulos, the Clinton advisor who is expected to spend time with the Blair camp, was not only the "Body Man" for that campaign, whose job was to be the side of the President (The Body) at all times. But he remained Clinton's closest adviser throughout his first term, and could offer Labour valuable lessons on how to manage the transition from campaigning to government.

Labour's connections with Clinton's team are now richer than ever. Mr Mandelson visited the Republican convention in San Diego, and watched the

second debate between Mr Clinton and Bob Dole with Mr Stephanopoulos. Jonathan Powell, Mr Blair's chief of staff, was a diplomat at the British Embassy in Washington and visits regularly. Philip Gould, Mr Blair's polling adviser, has been working with the second Clinton

campaign as he did with the first. John Prescott, Labour deputy leader, visited the Democratic convention in Chicago with his aides.

The last time Mr Clinton won, Mr Blair visited Clinton's team himself, along with Gordon Brown, the shadow chan-

cellor. It was there that Mr Brown invented "tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime", the slogan which helped carry him into the Labour leadership. The lessons Labour has learnt have not just been about techniques, although instant rebuttal of Tory

propaganda is now an obsession in the Millbank war room, with the help of the computer database of political quotes and documents known as Escalibur.

"I know how to work the last 90 days of a campaign," the 35-year-old Mr Stephanopoulos said when asked what kind of

help he was offering Labour.

"Day-to-day tactics, how to respond to the tried and true techniques of the right wing."

But the lessons are political, as some of the opponents of Labour's "moderatism" fear. Mr Clinton won on Tuesday with some striking coalitionist

rhetoric about the need for the parties to work together.

Partly, this is a feature of the American political system, but it certainly chimes with some of

Mr Blair's talk of governing "from the centre" and reaching out to Liberal Democrats and even One-Nation Tories.

Tory spin doctors to 'mind' Major in run-up to election

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Conservative party "spin doctors" are to play an increasing role behind the Prime Minister in the run-up to the election in an attempt to avoid damage like the row over caning.

The outline plan for drafting Tory party press officers into more of John Major's programme was agreed before the debacle over caning. But insiders believe it highlighted the difficulties they are facing.

The drive to regain the initiative from Labour could raise questions of a conflict between the interests of the party and government.

The Prime Minister's press office at Downing Street is staffed exclusively with civil servants. All party business is handled by the Tory Central Office press office, under Charles Lewington.

Party sources were highly irritated last week by the way the caning issue was handled by Downing Street. It was the

ing to the election. They point out that Labour cannot complain, because they plan to appoint Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair's chief press officer, to the Downing Street post, if Labour wins the election.

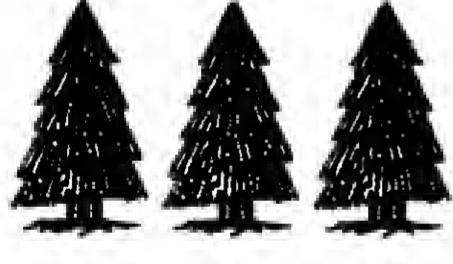
The Downing Street press operation will remain in civil service hands, until the election.

The Prime Minister, meanwhile, is planning a more aggressive campaign than the 1992 election tour, when he led a Tory fightback from a soapbox. "He is going to go into the Labour heartlands," said the source.

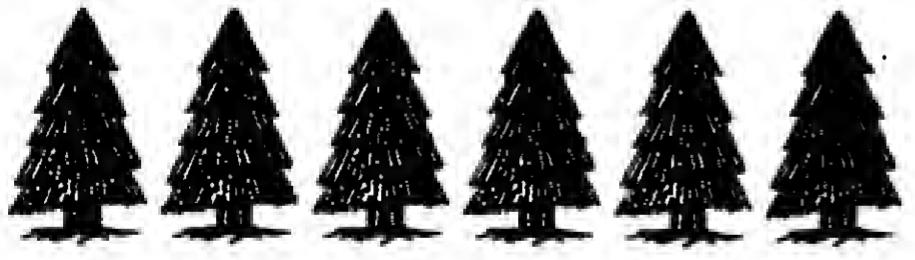
The campaign itinerary has yet to be worked out, but Mr Major is planning to visit staunch Labour areas, such as Liverpool. He told last month's Conservative Party conference that he would be out on the street, across Britain in the coming election.

Senior Tory sources confirmed that the Central Office press officers will be seeking to act as Mr Major's minder on such visits in the months lead-

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news

High Court Judge backs Home Secretary's 'harsh' decision and says adopted orphan must leave the country after all



Not welcome: Jaya Ram Khadka and his adopted father Richard Morley leaving the High Court in London yesterday

Photograph: John Voos

Nepalese man told he must leave Britain

Charlie Bain and Jessica Gavlock

A Nepalese man rescued from poverty and brought up by a British millionaire in a Gloucestershire castle yesterday lost his fight to stay in Britain.

The High Court yesterday upheld the Home Secretary Michael Howard's refusal to grant Jaya Ram Khadka "exceptional leave" to remain in Britain on compassionate grounds.

Mr Khadka and his adopted father Richard Morley are now considering setting up home in Nepal.

Mr Justice Laws said in his

ruling that many may regard the Home Secretary's decision to ignore an Immigration Appeal Tribunal recommendation to let Mr Khadka stay as "harsh", but after examining the case it was "perfectly understandable".

Mr Khadka, 20, was brought to Britain by businessman Richard Morley in 1990, honouring a pact he made with the boy's father, Basu Khadka – a policeman in a remote area of Nepal who saved Morley's life when the millionaire collapsed with a punctured lung while on a mountaineering expedition in 1984.

He refused any financial reward, but instead obtained a pledge from Mr Morley to take care of his son if he ever became separated from his adopted son.

"Wherever Jay goes I will go and the rest of my family will follow. My family will no doubt be split for a period, but we'll have to endure that. Eventually we will be reunited in a different country."

"There is no point in appealing if the law is that the Home Secretary can do what she wants, then that is the law and I cannot change the law".

Mr Khadka said that he hoped future explanations by Mr Howard of reasons to deport "may be clearer", but he said that he was "unable to conclude that the Secretary of State's decision in this case was beyond the range of responses open to a reasonable decision-maker".

Lilley illegally blocked benefit

A High Court Judge yesterday ruled that Peter Lilley, Secretary of State for Social Security, wrongly suspended welfare payments from hundreds of thousands of claimants.

Mr Justice Laws said that a regulation used by the Government to block payments pending legal challenges over benefits awards was "legally flawed and that Mr Lilley had been engaged in 'an illegitimate exercise'.

The ruling was a victory for the Child Poverty Action Group, on behalf of Paul Sutherland, 18, of Swansea, who is partially blind and a student at Aberystwyth University.

A CPAG legal officer, David Thomas, said: "Since the regulation was introduced in 1992, the Secretary of State has suspended benefit in similar circumstances in tens of thousands of cases. It always seemed to us quite wrong that claimants should be denied ongoing benefit – to which they have a legal entitlement – just because a court in another case might in the future interpret the law differently."

Mr Lilley was refused leave to appeal and will now consider re-opening his application direct to the Court of Appeal.

In January last year, Paul's mother won a ruling from an adjudication officer that Paul was entitled to disability living allowance for his care needs at "the middle rate".

The right to that payment had been established in an earlier case known as Halliday. But payments to Paul were withheld while Mr Lilley appealed against the Halliday ruling.

That appeal was lost in the Court of Appeal in June last year, but Paul's full benefit entitlement remained suspended while Mr Lilley took his case to the House of Lords.

That renewed appeal is due to be heard in early December but Paul is still owed some £2,000 in suspended payments.

Mr Justice Laws said that the regulation Mr Lilley had relied on (incorporated in the 1987 Social Security Regulations) was outside the law.

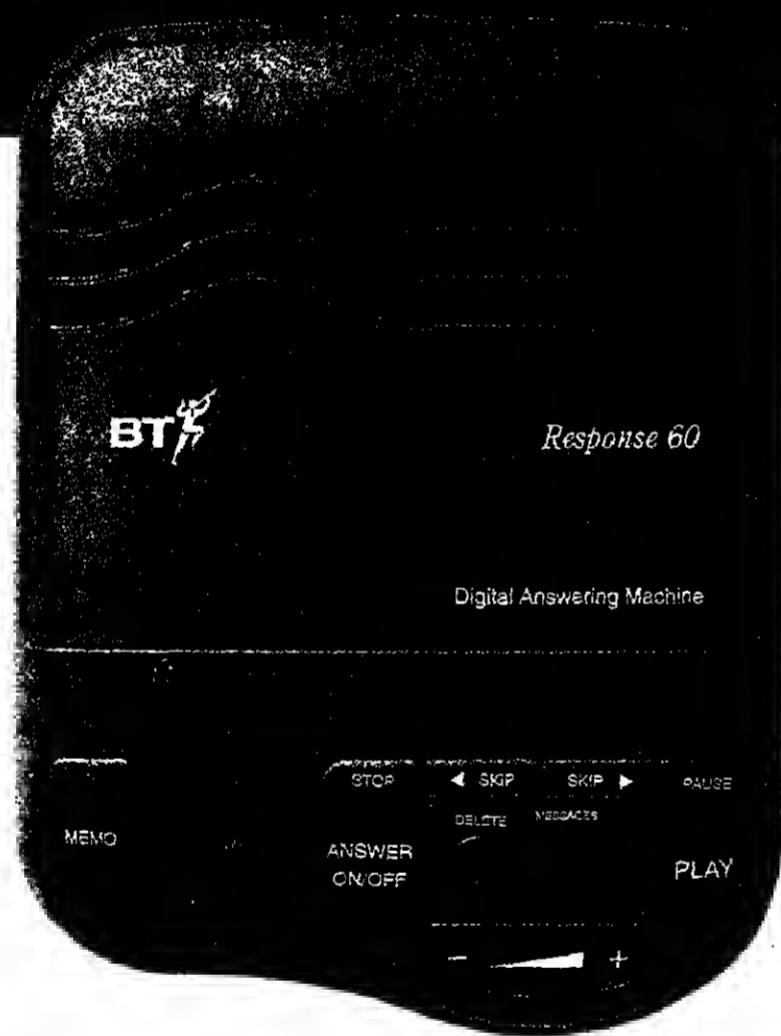
He held that the legislation under which the regulation was made did not allow payments to be blocked while the courts were deciding whether an award ought to be revised now or in the future".

The judge warned Government ministers: "Where the executive has been allowed by the legislature to make law, it must abide strictly by the terms of its delegated authority."

Later Mr Justice Thomas said: "The Secretary of State has used the power he claimed to have in over 50,000 cases... The effect of this judgment is that he didn't have power to do that."

Jill Alloo-King of the National Federation of the Blind said: "It's a big breakthrough."

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In The Picture

Too much sex, drugs, murder and mayhem. Frankly Mr Bond, you're a physical wreck



Shaken and stirred: Films depicted a glamorous life for Bond, but medical analysis shows he would now be disturbed and probably impotent

Liz Hunt
Health Editor

James Bond, the world's most famous secret agent, has been dealt a blow he is unlikely to ever recover from, with claims that his hard-living, hard-loving lifestyle left him licensed to kill no one but himself.

Agent 007, the epitome of suave, sophisticated manhood, who was lustful after by millions of women and became a role model for millions men, has been revealed as a mentally deranged, physical wreck, who is

probably impotent, and who never recovered from his trauma-ridden childhood.

An analysis of Bond's literary and early celluloid existence by a team of medical experts has laid bare a life that has left the man so badly shaken and stirrred that "M" should be informed immediately.

Professor Brice Pitt, of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, says that the death of Bond's parents in a climbing accident when he was just 11 left scars that could never be erased. Bond's search for love led him

to lose his virginity in a Paris brothel aged 16 but the seeds of the sadistic and anti-social murderous aggression were already in place. He murdered his first lover, the brothel madam Martha Debrandt, a year later. Mike Berry, a forensic clinical psychologist, describes Bond at this stage as an "emotionally crippled Type-A psychopath who is suffering from post-traumatic and long-term stress". He says later repeated blows to his head and a reported bout of amnesia, suggest that he has permanent brain damage.

Bond also questioned why it was that 007 avoided close relationships, perhaps because he was afraid of getting too close to a woman and then losing her like he lost his parents. "This is a very unstable subject who is in desperate need of help. The way he bottles up his feelings and shows no emotions leaves him like a volcano waiting to erupt," Dr Berry says in the December issue of *Men's Health* magazine, which commissioned the Bond analysis.

He says later repeated blows to his head and a reported bout of amnesia, suggest that he has permanent brain damage.

Bond's use of amphetamines before an assignment – powdered Benzedrine in a glass of Dom Pérignon 1953 champagne – was his preferred formulation – would have done nothing to alleviate his underlying precarious mental state, Dr Berry and Professor Pitt conclude.

Bond's addiction to nicotine – he worked through 70 a day of a high tar, unfiltered brand – would have exacerbated his dangerous mood swings, according to Martin Jarvis, principle scientist at the Imperial Cancer Research Fund. His high-cholesterol diet and lack of exercise would have added to his risk of heart attack.

But, perhaps most frightening of all is the detail of Bond's drinking habits. On a typical day he consumed one "vodkatini" – a double Smirnoff vodka and a double Martini – a half-bottle of champagne, and a cocktail comprising vermouth, gin, and vodka. Oo a mission, he would add whisky, wines and a mixture of bourbons to the brew.

Andrew McNeil at the Institute of Alcohol Studies said this was "incompatible with being in the secret service and indeed incompatible with being alive". It could lead to shrinkage of his sexual organs, and impotence. However, 007's sexual exploits appear to contradict this view. In addition to his visits to brothels, 007 sleeps with around 68 women a year. He never uses a condom, eschews no-negotiable sex, and is exposed to all manner of sexually transmitted diseases, according to Dr Caroline Bradbeer, a consultant gynaecologist. "I would expect that long-term damage to his testicles will mean he is now probably sterile and firing blanks," she said.

007's life in the fast lane

Golddigger
"James Bond, with two double bourbons inside him, sat in the final departure lounge of Miami Airport and thought about life and death. It was part of his profession to kill people."

"Room service? I'd like to order breakfast. Half a pint of orange juice, three eggs, lightly scrambled, with bacon, a double portion of café Espresso with cream, toast. Marmalade. Got it?"

Thunderball:
"He had a hangover, a bad one, with an aching head and stiff joints. When he coughed – smoking too much goes with drinking too much and doubles the hangover – clouds of small luminous black spots swam across his vision like amoebae in pond water."

The Spy Who Loved Me:
"While I busied myself with the percolator, he opened his case and took out a small bottle of white pills. He took out two and when I gave him the coffee he swallowed them down. Benzodiazepine. That'll keep me awake for tonight. I'll fit in some sleep tomorrow."

"Suddenly there were two more hands washing me and a naked body was up against mine and I smelled the sweat and the gunpowder and I turned and laughed up into his grimy face and then I was in his arms and our mouths met in a kiss that seemed as it would never end while the water poured down and made us shut our eyes."

Priests to face new system of church justice

Wide-ranging reforms proposed in attempt to streamline outdated disciplinary procedures

Andrew Brown
Religious Affairs Correspondent

The Church of England is to replace its cumbersome and expensive system of church courts, whose ancestry goes back before the Norman conquest, with modern tribunals which will meet in secret. It will also introduce a new disciplinary offence of "gross indecency".

The new courts will enable bishops to deal effectively with heresy and sexual misconduct; the present system, last reformed in 1963, is so cumbersome and expensive that only three cases have ever been brought under it.

The reforms proposed yesterday arose from the case of the Rev Thomas Tyler, who was four times tried and convicted of adultery with one of his parishioners (twice on appeal) and whose protestations of innocence cost the church around £250,000.

A committee chaired by Canon Alan Hawker was set up in 1992 to consider streamlining the system. While it deliberated, the trial took place of the Dean of Lincoln, the Very Rev Brandon Jackson, which cost the church a further £100,000.

As the report makes plain, clergy discipline is at present operated on two levels. About a third of English priests work on contracts, usually for five to seven years. They have at present little protection against a refusal to renew their contracts; the report mentions the case of the Rev Anthony Freeman, a Sussex priest sacked for deciding he no longer believed in God.

However, had Mr Freeman been among the two-thirds of clergy whose jobs are held for life, under the "freehold system", nothing could have been done, said one of the commission members.

The report suggests that clergy with freehold are presently disciplined unofficially, because of the inadequacies of the law. One of the main instruments in this is a semi-official blacklist.

Canon Hawker denied that the report as launched that it would put excessive power into the hands of bishops. He said the new arrangements transferred much of the responsibility for the prosecution of cases from the bishops to independent inquirers (who would be retired police officers or similarly qualified laymen) and that they guaranteed greater fairness for clergy accused of misconduct.

Canon Hawker denied that it would put excessive power into the hands of bishops. He said the new arrangements transferred much of the responsibility for the prosecution of cases from the bishops to independent inquirers (who would be retired police officers or similarly qualified laymen) and that they guaranteed greater fairness for clergy accused of misconduct.

Passengers on a luxury ship have issued a writ over the "extreme discomfort" they suffered on a hurricane-hit cruise to the Caribbean, writes Michael Streeter.

Thirty-eight members of last autumn's trip on P&O's £200m flagship *Oriana* claim they suffered a "ruined holiday" because of the weather and excessive vibration on board.

Passengers – who were offered a 20 per cent discount on a future cruise – also complained that the food and entertainment were below standard, and that they were not warned of the risk of such appalling weather.

A spokesman for their lawyers said: "One major grievance is that the cruise should not have gone to the Caribbean in the height of the hurricane season or at least the brochure should have warned of the likelihood of disruption ... It is interesting to note that ... the *Oriana* no longer offers a Caribbean cruise in September."

A P&O spokesman said: "We believe there is no claim and we will be fighting the action."

Katrina Porteous' dialect poems of the Northumbrian fishermen are published next week by Bloodaxe in her debut collection *The Lost Music*. They written for Charlie Douglas (1909-95) a fisherman, and son of fisherman, from the village of Beadnell in Northumberland. "I wanted to haul his memories free / Like a string of crevices from the troubled sea", she writes in the poem that bears his name. Commercial trawlers have killed the living to be made from small boats along the Northumbrian coast. "We've finished himny. The fishin's dead".

DAILY POEM

Splicing Rope

By Katrina Porteous

It's simple, himny. And ye dae
Is born in' ends so th' drivin' i' fray,
Turn towards ye, an' push away.
And the rope-ends knitt in a seamless splice
As Charlie's bony fingers weave them.
And the hut walls creak. In the sandy light
The seas rush in on the rocks, and cleave them.
It's come to a matter of touch, nor sight,
In the years since Charlie's father taught him
With fingers brown as if bark'd with cuch:
"W' mirror liked tarrin' over-much.
Then hard his stick in your hands, v'na,
An' aa' the tar gets in, y' kna.
Ooh! Bloody mordur, till it bost'
Naen painkillers then, y' kna;
Wi'oot them rubber gloves on foray."
The hut is a safe boat, tight from the wind,
Warmed by the hot stove. Charlie's hand.
Safe on my shoulder, warm, warms me
Tight with the boy on his father's knee.
Bound by the same turns he spins me.
Born it ends so th' drivin' i' fray,
Turn towards ye, an' push away.

Passengers sue over hurricane

Passengers on a luxury ship have issued a writ over the "extreme discomfort" they suffered on a hurricane-hit cruise to the Caribbean, writes Michael Streeter.

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Anglo-French talks: Major and Chirac to dine at sea as suspected British beef causes closure of Hard Rock Cafe in Paris

Café crisis gives summit a bad taste

Mary Dejevsky
Bordeaux
Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

When Jacques Chirac and John Major arranged a Franco-British summit for today, there must have been one subject above all which they wanted to keep off the agenda: beef. Conflicts over BSE are, after all, one of the few issues that cloud one of Britain's better bilateral relationships in Europe.

It was rather unfortunate, then, that on the eve of their meeting, beef slid back on the menu.

It was announced yesterday that the Hard Rock Cafe in Paris had been closed for 15 days by order of the Paris authorities on suspicion of having breached the European embargo on British beef. Some 300kg of suspect meat was found in a freezer at the cafe last week.

The Hard Rock Cafe described the move as "completely unjustified" and said that it would appeal. Its defence is that the beef originated in the Irish Republic, and was packaged in Britain, a procedure which it says is permitted under the EU embargo, so long as the company concerned is on an

approved list. Its spokesman added that only French beef was used in the cafe's hamburgers.

The French authorities had initially appeared to be considering the cafe's arguments, but changed their mind on Wednesday, when the cafe was ordered to be shut as constituting "a serious risk to public health".

They say that this is the second time the Hard Rock cafe has been found with suspect meat: a raid in June found 500kg of unlabelled beef - itself an offence. This resulted in a warning.

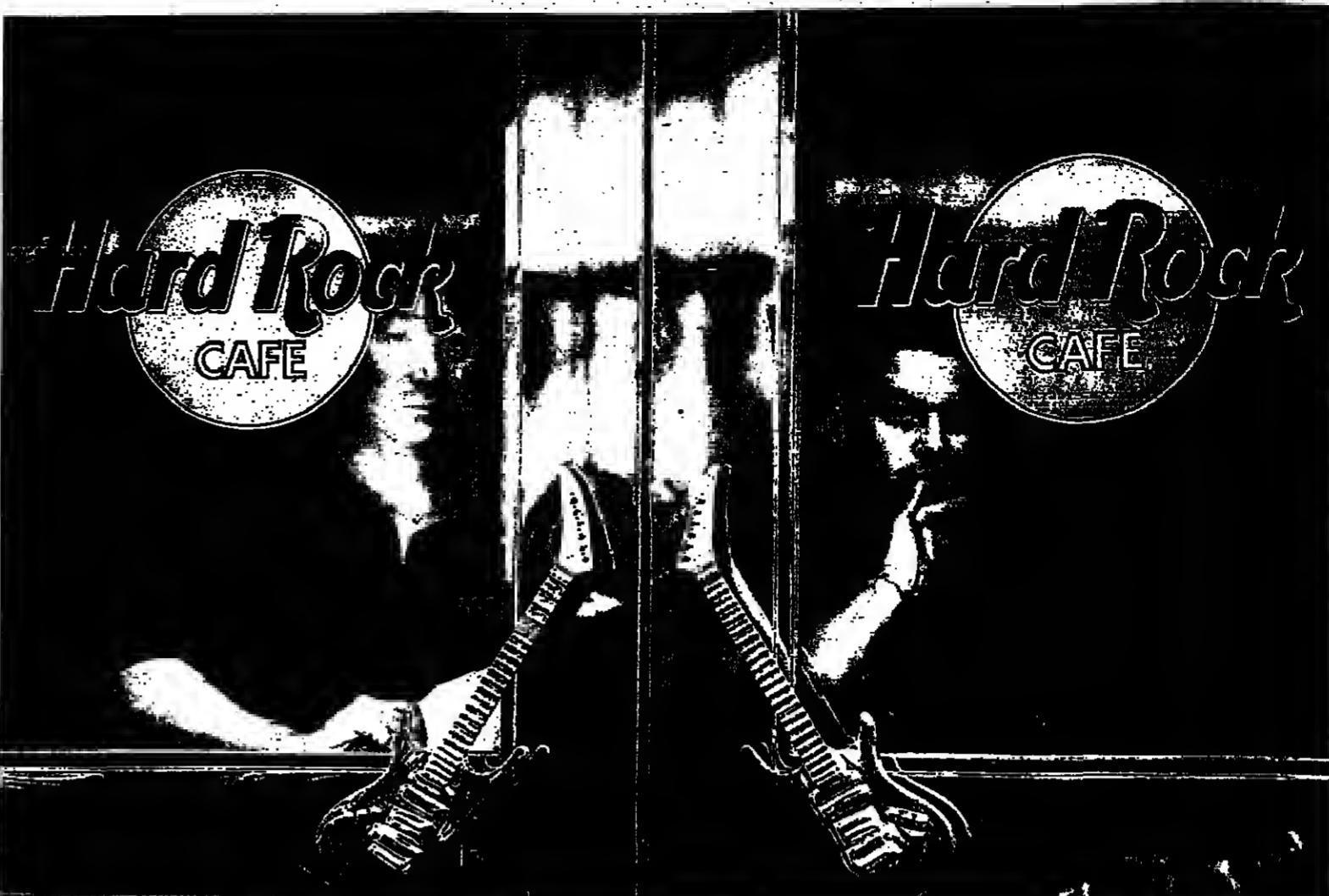
Regardless of the technicalities of the case, the closure of such a high-profile operation as the Hard Rock Cafe in Paris suggests an attempt by the authorities to show that they are enforcing the embargo on British beef.

That the cafe is a foreign, rather than French, operation makes the measure all the more popular. So far, it is mostly French butchers' shops that have been caught with meat, and fined. To target such a prime symbol of Anglo-Saxon culture will have been deeply pleasing to some.

Doubtless Mr Major and Mr Chirac were trying to avoid the subject as they met for dinner last night, ahead of today's

naval sources yesterday stressed the agreement did not cover nuclear matters although there is co-operation between the two countries in deciding nuclear strategy and shared nuclear patrols.

A Franco-British European Air Group, was inaugurated by John Major and President Chirac on 30 October 1995. Because naval operations are centred on ships, a fixed headquarters is not needed. The Royal Navy said yesterday it would mean building on common procedures and means of communication.



Locked out: Two employees at the Paris branch of the Hard Rock Cafe peeking behind closed doors on Wednesday after the city authorities, suspecting that contraband British beef was on the menu, ordered its closure for 15 days

British exiles enjoy class of Bordeaux

Mary Dejevsky
Bordeaux

In the heart of Bordeaux, where five of its great avenues join, is the Maison du Vin and the International Council of Bordeaux Wine, the co-ordinating body for the region's biggest export. Believe this if you will, but the person who represents this most French of industries to the outside world, is not French.

Her origins are Scottish, she was educated in England and she started her career in the US. Fiona Morrison, a straight-talking (in two languages) master of wine, is, as she describes herself to associates, "the flag carrier of Bordeaux wine".

She is also a pillar of the British community in Bordeaux,

and held up as an example of the city's cosmopolitan character - would a foreigner even be considered for such a job in Paris? - and of the special affinity that exists between the British and Bordeaux.

His biggest complaint is the cost of employing other people

More than 500 years after the city fell to the French and the English retreated across the Channel, many happily established Britons feel that 300 years of English rule (1154 to 1453) left their mark. The English are judged to have ruled with a light hand, encouraged trade and helped the city to a mercantile pre-eminence that it never completely lost.

Now, there are around 9,000 Britons resident in the area and many more who own second homes. Along with the hoteliers, estate agents and the builders, there is an adviser to French motorways, a couple with a paper factory, a fertiliser dealer and a sturgeon farmer

producing Aquitaine caviar. There are lawyers, musicians, translators and teachers, and a slew of financial and personnel consultants.

These include financial advisers like Rupert Holderness, who arrived 12 years ago for National Westminster Bank and stayed on when the bank pulled out. His wife is French, his son goes to a French state school. But it is the lifestyle that also keeps him in France. Would he return to the UK? He pauses, just long enough to imagine the London he left, and the commuting, and the career options. "No, I don't think I could."

Most of his business is with the British community, and extends well beyond the immediate Bordeaux region and that traditional British hunting ground, the Dordogne. Like many of the British business people, he has installed his office on one of the recent trading estates that ring Bordeaux.

His biggest complaint is the cost of employing other people. There is a secretarial pool for the block; employing full-time assistance is too expensive because of the charges employers must pay. Asked whether he would employ more people if the charges were lower, he insists: "Yes, no doubt about it."

Only some of the British residents are servicing the British community. At least six in the Bordeaux area are taking on the locals at their own game, with a degree of success. If not great financial reward. About 30km

She speaks good French but curses French bureaucracy

outside Bordeaux to the south, in a small settlement called Cérons, live Robert and Sue Watts, winemakers.

She was an investment consultant and amateur winemaker, he was a barrister, and 10 years ago - after their respective parents had died - they decided that on a "now or never" change of lifestyle. They toyed with the idea of Spain, but decided that if they were going in for wine, it had to be France and Bordeaux.

With the good offices of a local French vineyard owner, they found the Château du Scul, a small, neat chateau with 2.5 hectares of vines that had been leased out to a neighbour. They

started from scratch, buying all the equipment new, and making - as they admit - mistakes. Although Sue Watts speaks good French, she curses French bureaucracy, saying the goal posts, especially on employment regulations, seem to change just when you think everything has been clarified.

The business has grown. This year, their white Château du Scul, estate bottled, won a special mention (one of 300 out of 20,000) in the prestigious Hachette Wine Guide - a real mark of acceptance in the very closed and established French wine world - and orders from the Café Flo organisation. But they reckon that there is still some way to go before their considerable investment starts to pay.

■ Back in Bordeaux just now there is an air of expectation in the British community. Marks & Spencer are opening their first store here in 10 days' time. The British are looking forward to buying what Fiona Morrison decorously called underware; the Bordelais will be looking for conservatively styled cashmere and wool to match their bourgeois image. Strange though it might seem, they are also looking forward to the food: breakfast cereals and tea, sandwiches, muffins and cakes.

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West delays sending peace force to Zaire

The European Union, the United States and South Africa expressed the will yesterday to arrange emergency help for 1.2 million refugees in eastern Zaire, some of whom are already dying in the region's waterless volcanic mountains.

France and Spain proposed earlier this week to send a 5,000-strong force to the crisis zone, comprising about 1,000 French troops, a somewhat smaller Spanish contingent, and units from the United States and other countries. But some of France's EU allies are shrinking from the idea of committing soldiers to such a forbidding region, now controlled by various small armies and militias.

British military and diplomatic sources yesterday said Zaire would be a principal topic of discussion at the Franco-British summit today. They said they were unlikely to announce a "firm decision" to intervene in Zaire after today, but that they would not rule it out either. MoD sources said they were awaiting

France dismayed at 'spinelessness', report Tony Barber and Christopher Bellamy

a firm set of political objectives and a firm military plan.

Britain will be talking to

France about the role of any multinational peacekeeping force. "We can't be specific about an operation because there isn't an operation yet," sources said. The most likely role for foreign forces would be to secure corridors for the evacuation of casualties and the return of refugees into Rwanda.

Belgium, the former colonial ruler, said its historical involvement in Zaire (formerly the Belgian Congo) meant that its motives in sending troops would be open to misinterpretation.

For France's proposal to take effect quickly, it would almost certainly need the participation of the United States, which alone among Western countries has enough giant military transport aircraft for such missions. The US State Depart-

ment said last week that the US would not send troops to eastern Zaire, but was leaning towards offering logistical support for an emergency aid operation.

However, US officials contend that France has not yet spelled out in enough detail what would constitute a safe corridor, nor which countries' troops would be involved. France's Foreign Minister, Hervé de Charette, expressed consternation yesterday with the apparent unwillingness of Western allies to endorse the French proposal. "The main obstacle is the international community's spinelessness," he said.

In reality, the problems go somewhat deeper. The chief of the dominant Hutu forces in eastern Zaire, Laurent Kabila, is warning that no European troops, especially French, should take part in a multinational operation. The Hutu blame

fighting and avoid Rwanda. Another 300,000 are trapped by other fronts. With the Zairean army on the run, the Rwandan-backed rebels' main opposition appears to be Hutu militias who ran the camp and master-minded the 1994 genocide.

"They told us that the Tutsis would murder us if we came back," said Mr Eliel. "But when the fighting reached the camp we had to make a choice." Mr Eliel said he wanted to return to Rwanda almost from the start. "At first our leaders told us the war was still going on. Later we found out that what they said was not so."

UN videos aimed at persuading the refugees to return were shown in the camp but Kibumba leaders said it was all propaganda. "They did not need guns to stop us leaving," said Mr Eliel. "Local people were scared. I stayed because my family did not want me to take my wife's children to Rwanda but when the fighting started around the camp, there was no

need for further discussion." The UN High Commissioner for Refugees continues to warn that, though it cannot be seen, an enormous humanitarian disaster is under way in eastern Zaire.

A spokesman, Ray Wilkinson, said yesterday that the war offered the international community the opportunity to break the hold of the Hutu camp militias on the refugees and bring them home to "safe corridors" after persuasion that Rwanda is safe.

As they boarded buses yesterday to return to the villages they fled two years ago, the Kibumba refugees said they were not afraid. But their eyes betrayed them.

Mr Eliel said he had been treated well since his return three days ago, except for two soldiers he met on the journey. "They started kicking me," he said. Then he gave a nervous giggle. "They said I should have come home earlier. I was two years late."

War drives refugees home

Mary Braid
Gisenye

They sit amid a sea of blue UN tarpaulins, feet bloody and bandaged from the five-day cross-border trek that war – not gentle persuasion – finally persuaded them to make.

They are, as yet, extremely rare – among the first Rwandan Hutus to return home from refugee camps set up on Zaire's eastern border two years ago after the Hutu genocide of 800,000 of their fellow Tutsi countrymen.

The path this group of 200 forged through dense forests after Kibumba, the most northerly camp, was engulfed by fighting between Zairean troops and Rwandan-backed rebels, is now strewn with bodies of their relatives and friends. "We did not have time to bury the dead," said Hagekimaana Eliel.

The people of Tahindu and Kibumba have turned south-west with more than 400,000 other refugees to escape the

fighting and avoid Rwanda. Another 300,000 are trapped by other fronts. With the Zairean army on the run, the Rwandan-backed rebels' main opposition appears to be Hutu militias who ran the camp and master-minded the 1994 genocide.

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Rank and file: Dissident Khmer Rouge soldiers in their new uniforms during a ceremony to join the Cambodian government forces, in the north-western town of Pailin

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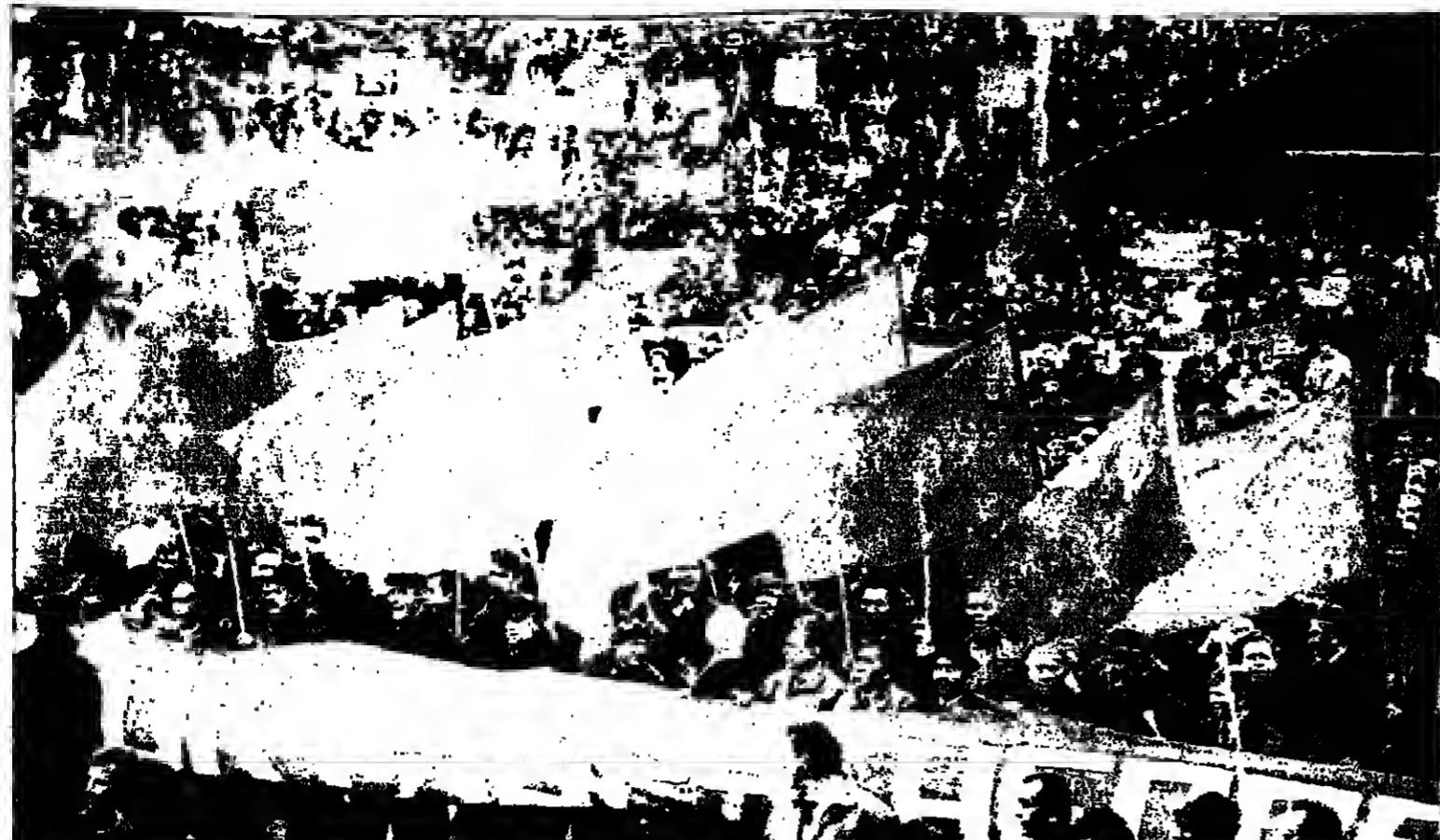
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Keep the Red Flag flying: Russian Communists demonstrating in Moscow yesterday, on the 79th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. President Yeltsin announced that, in future, 7 November will be known as the 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation'. Photograph: Ulli Michel/Reuters

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Heart surgeon says Yeltsin is no alcoholic

Helen Womack
Moscow

Michael De Bakey, the Texas heart surgeon who monitored Boris Yeltsin's bypass operation this week, said yesterday he had also examined his liver and could refute the widely-held view that the Kremlin leader was a heavy drinker. "He is not an alcoholic," Dr De Bakey declared.

His remarks came in the latest update on the condition of the 65-year-old President, who yesterday took his first steps after undergoing a quintuple heart bypass on Tuesday. Surgeons said he was recovering well and would probably move from intensive care to an ordi-

nary hospital ward today. While displaying unprecedented "gloss" about the health of a Kremlin leader, Doctors are coy on the subject of whether over-indulgence in vodka contributed to Mr Yeltsin's problems. But as a foreigner, Dr De Bakey, 83, evidently felt no need to censor himself.

Mr Yeltsin's liver and kidneys did not look like those of someone who abused alcohol, he said. As he resumed normal life, the President would be able to enjoy a drink. "Hopefully, he'll moderate any excesses he may have had. But I wouldn't expect an occasional experience of that kind to have an effect on his heart."

However, ordinary Russians may be sceptical about Dr De Bakey's comments. "There's a fine line between alcoholism and the broad Russian character," said one Moscovite, on hearing the news.

Even if he can drink sometimes, the President will have to cut down on salami, a Russian favourite, as he has been put on a low-fat diet for the rest of his life. Dr De Bakey warned against letting unhealthy eating habits creep back in. Patients, he said, "start off doing pretty well, and then they feel better and become more normal, and the next thing you know they are acting like ordinary people".

If Mr Yeltsin gives doctors cause for concern in the im-

mediate future, however, it is more likely to be over his insistence on resuming work as fast as possible rather than over his dietary indiscretions. With political infighting threatening to break out again at the first sign of weakness from Mr Yeltsin and restiveness among millions of workers who have not received their wages for months, the President is under enormous pressure to show that he is once more in charge.

Yesterday he sent a message to Russians from his hospital bed, saying he was back at work. To prove it, he marked the 79th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution by decreeing that 7 November will remain a public holiday, but henceforth be known as the Day of Accord and Reconciliation. "People are still divided into Reds and Whites, us and them," he said. "It is time to turn the page. Russia is indivisible and we must be together."

His appeal cut little ice with Communist opponents who, prevented from marching across Red Square as in Soviet times, gathered instead near the Bolshoi Theatre to air their economic grievances. Their leader, Gennady Zyuganov, said the 23-hour transfer of power to Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin on the day of the President's operation had made Russians "a laughing stock in the eyes of the world".

Tasmanian admits gun massacre

Robert Milliken
Port Arthur

Relief swept across the island of Tasmania yesterday when Martin Bryant, the man who massacred 35 people at Port Arthur six months ago, pleaded guilty in court to all charges against him over the world's biggest mass shooting by a lone gunman.

Staff at Port Arthur, the 19th-century prison for transported British convicts, which is now one of Australia's chief tourist attractions, could barely contain their emotions when the news came through.

They opened bottles of champagne, donned party hats and closed their doors early to hold a celebratory barbecue on the lawn by the seafront where they had watched in horror on Sunday, 28 April, as Bryant stalked through the crowded site, armed with two semi-automatic weapons, shooting tourists and Port Arthur employees at random.

Bryant, 29, admitted to 72 charges over the Port Arthur killings when he appeared in the Tasmanian Supreme Court in Hobart, for the start of what was expected to be an agonising trial, at which hundreds of witnesses were due to be called to relive the horrors of modern Australia's worst massacre.

Only two months ago, he had pleaded not guilty to the same charges. Bryant's lawyer resigned soon afterwards.

The unemployed Hobart man, with long blonde hair, said to be a millionaire from inherited money and property, smirked and laughed as he stood in the dock yesterday, shielded by bullet-proof glass, and answered "Guilty" to each of the charges. People in the public gallery wept. Some relatives and friends of the victims fled sobbing from the court.

After Bryant's dramatic change of plea, John Avery, his new lawyer, said: "We have been doing a lot of talking over the last few weeks. I am gratified that the right decision has now been made." Mr Justice Cox, Tasmania's chief justice, will sentence Bryant on 19 November. The judge issued an edict to staff at Port Arthur not to comment until he hands down his sentence.

But the reaction was already clear. "We're immensely relieved," said David McDonald, a tour guide. "We were dreading the anguish of going through all this in court again. Now we can try to get back to normal." Walter Milne, a pharmacist whose wife and two young daughters were among those whom Bryant murdered, said Australia must now turn its

attention to tightening its gun laws so that a similar massacre never happens again.

Since the Port Arthur massacre, Australians have surrendered more than 130,000 guns under an amnesty introduced as part of a bid to reform the country's lax firearms laws. The weapons are crushed or cut in two before the owner's eyes, then passed into an ever-increasing stockpile of scrap metal. The federal government in Canberra has taxed every Australian to build a fund of A\$350,000 (£250,000) to compensate gun owners under the amnesty, which runs until next October.

Gun laws are the province of Australia's six states. Their no-



Bryant: Worst mass killing in Australian history

torious reluctance to tighten their laws was shattered by Port Arthur, and most states have since introduced legislation to ban semi-automatic, military-style weapons of the type that Bryant, and gunmen in earlier mass shootings in Sydney and Melbourne, used. Tasmania, which once had the weakest laws, now has some of the toughest. Almost 10,000 banned guns have been surrendered in that state.

However, the surrendered guns are thought to be the tip of an iceberg. Estimates of the number of guns in Australia range from four to 10 million. The rural-based gun lobby is urging people to bury their guns rather than hand them in. And the Australian Coalition for Gun Control has criticised the new laws for still allowing large-scale and semi-automatic pistols, of the type Britain has banned since the Cullen report.

Roland Browne, the coalition's deputy chairman, said in Tasmania yesterday: "Our new gun laws have brought us up to the point that Britain was at before the Cullen report. Australia should draw on the Dunblane experience to minimise the availability of guns."

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Christopher is first to leave Clinton's team

President may announce new appointments today

Rupert Cornwell
Washington

By no stretch of the imagination could he be called a great secretary of state - a Marshall, an Acheson, a Kissinger. But if diligence and self-effacing decency were the sole requirements of his trade, then Warren Christopher would have no equal.

Yesterday, George Mitchell, the former Senate majority leader and peace envoy to Ireland, was the marginal favorite to succeed him, thanks to his experience on Capitol Hill. Madeleine Albright, US Ambassador to the UN, is, however, very much in the frame, as is the outgoing Georgia Senator Sam Nunn, and Republican Richard Lugar of Indiana.

Deputy Secretary of State under President Jimmy Carter, and head of Mr Clinton's transition team after the 1992 election, Mr Christopher is the first of at least four Cabinet members to depart the Administration after the President's re-election, and return to his law practice in Los Angeles.

Either of the last two are equally plausible replacements for the Defense Secretary, William Perry, who plans to step down early in the new term. Other departing top officials are expected to include Federico Pena, Transportation Secretary; Mickey Kantor, Commerce Secretary; Hazel O'Leary, Energy Secretary and Leon Panetta, the White House chief of staff. The first replacements could be announced by Mr Clinton as early as today.

The impending Cabinet reshuffle has now assumed such dimensions that Mr Clinton has postponed his holiday in Hawaii next week. Quick appointments are essential if he is to keep up the momentum of his re-election, and not allow attention to focus on such embarrassments as foreign Democratic campaign contributions.

Yesterday did bring one boon for Mr Clinton - the announcement by Republican Senator Alfonse D'Amato of New York that his Senate Banking Committee would hold no further hearings on Whitewater, leaving the pursuit of that financial controversy in the hands of the special prosecutor, Kenneth Starr, who is expected to seek new indictments, possibly of White House staff, soon.

His personal civility and concern for staff are legendary. This dour North Dakotan has not shone as a foreign policy salesman and has ticked close in Congress to fend off heavy cuts in the department imposed by penny-pinching and isolationist Republicans. Two years ago he offered to resign, but Mr Clinton insisted he stay on.

Yesterday, Bill Clinton was due to take his leave of his faithful retainer in a Rose Garden ceremony at the White House. As long expected, the 71-year-old Mr Christopher is the first of at least four Cabinet members to depart the Administration after the President's re-election, and return to his law practice in Los Angeles.

He has devoted huge amounts of time and energy to the Middle East. Yet despite constant visits to the region, complete with more than a dozen meetings with President Assad of Syria, and separate peace treaties between Israel and the PLO, and Israel and Jordan. Yet the region is arguably more dangerous today than in 1993, and an overall settlement further away than ever.

Richard Holbrooke, not Mr Christopher, was architect of the 1995 Bosnia settlement. Mr Christopher has largely delegated Nato and Russian policy to his deputy, Strobe Talbott, and has neglected China. To his credit, he has presided over a harmonious national security team, unscarred by the feuding between the White House and State Department that marked the Nixon and Carter administrations.



Welcome home: Warren Christopher, the outgoing US Secretary of State, smiles after being praised by Bill Clinton a speech in the garden of the White House, in Washington DC, yesterday. Photograph: Mike Theiler/Reuters

international

Broadcaster's gaffe puts candid views on camera

Rupert Cornwell

David Brinkley, the doyen of American television current affairs journalists, was to bow in glory out this weekend with the ultimate coup for his Sunday morning talk show - a one-on-one interview with the President of the United States. He may still get his interview, and it will certainly make good watching. But not for the original reason intended.

Early on Wednesday morning, with Bill Clinton's victory known for hours, the host of *This Week With David Brinkley* gathered with other members of ABC's election coverage team for some final reflections on the night. Mr Brinkley, however, seemed to think the session was off-camera.

"Four years of wit, poetry, music, love and alacrity," was his optimistic assessment of second Clinton term, "plus more goddamned nonsense." The President's victory speech in Little Rock a few minutes earlier had been "one of the worst things I've ever heard ... totally unnecessary."

Twice his colleagues tried to warn him he was on the air, but the 76-year-old Mr Brinkley ploughed on. Unlike his fellow broadcasters, Mr Clinton was not creative: "He has not a creative bone in his body. Therefore he's a bore, and always will be a bore."

Unfortunately this eternally tedious politician had agreed a few days earlier to the *This Week* interview, the first after his re-

election and intended as a special honour to mark the retirement of a man who has been at the top of his business almost since it began.

In 1956, he was picked by NBC to cover the Eisenhower and Stevenson nominating conventions. Shortly thereafter began the *Brinkley Report* that made him a household name almost to match the peerless Walter Cronkite.

Today he is the last active

'Clinton has not a creative bone in his body. Therefore he's a bore and always will be a bore'

practitioner from a TV generation that included Mr Cronkite, his former partner Chet Huntley, and the late John Chancellor.

Yesterday, the White House had not yet decided whether to go ahead with the interview, which would offer the ultimate contrast in styles. Mr Brinkley is celebrated for his dry, terse and increasingly cranky style. Mr Clinton is charming, effusive, and prone to talk as if there were no tomorrow.

Whatever else he may be, he is rarely boring.

Nasa mission blasts off to investigate life on Mars

Marcia Dunn
Associated Press

Cape Canaveral — A US spacecraft yesterday embarked on a 400 million-mile, 10-month journey to Mars, the first step in a decade-long effort to determine whether there has ever been life on the planet.

The Delta rocket is carrying the *Mars Global Surveyor*, to replace a Mars probe that mysteriously disappeared three years ago. It should reach Mars in September 1997 and, after six months of casting into a mapping orbit, begin scrutinizing the Martian surface and atmosphere.

"It's the beginning of a long

sequence of missions ultimately whose goal must be to determine whether or not life was ever on Mars or even perhaps exists now," said Wesley Huntress Jr, the head of Nasa.

The *Global Surveyor* is the first of 10 US spacecraft to be sent to Mars over the next decade. It is the long-awaited successor to Nasa's last Mars

probe, the *Mars Observer*, which never reached its destination.

Nasa expects to launch a pair of relatively inexpensive spacecraft to Mars every two years until 2005, including a robotic mission to return Martian soil and rocks to Earth that should settle the debate over life on Mars.

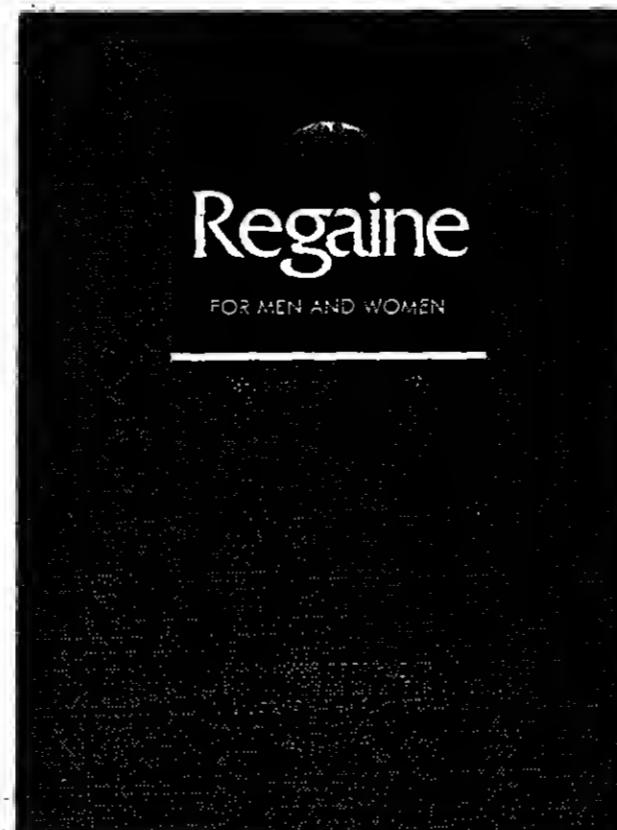
The *Global Surveyor*, made mostly

from left-over parts from the *Mars Observer*, will scout for future landing spots. The total mission cost is \$230m.

The *Mars Pathfinder* will follow on 2 December and, if all goes well, land on the planet on 4 July 1997.

As for sending humans, that will have to wait until at least the second decade of the next century.

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international

Chinese order blitz on deadly polluters

Ageing heavy industries are poisoning a nation, writes **Teresa Poole**

Xian — China has carried out a blitz on township industries which pollute the country, forcibly closing nearly 50,000 small factories. Paper mills, tanneries and dye factories were among the main offenders, accused of sluicing out chemical waste into rivers and drinking water supplies.

The National Environmental Protection Agency had set 1 October as a deadline for township



At risk: Chinese schoolchildren from Lanzhou, in Gansu province, wearing masks to protect against heavy pollution from nearby industrial plants

Photograph: AP

enterprises to clean up or face shut-down. The agency claims that by the middle of last month, 49,735 polluters had stopped operating, even though "several" local governments had not yet complied with the order.

Pollution in China has reached crisis levels, the combination of ageing dirty heavy industries and a decade of breakneck economic develop-

ment which has given scant regard to environmental consequences. For years, Chinese leaders have paid lip-service to environmental protection, passing a host of new laws but do-

ing little in terms of enforcement. A third of the country is affected by acid rain.

While environmentalists have welcomed the latest factory closures as evidence that Chi-

na was finally taking firm action on pollution, they point out that the measures only targeted township industries and did not touch the worst offenders — large state-owned enterprises.

In industrial Xian, for example, one of China's most polluted provincial capitals and well-known to Western tourists as the home of Emperor Qinshihuang's terracotta army, this

latest crackdown closed a mere 216 small factories. This will have a limited impact on air pollution and contaminated water caused by old textile, machine-processing and chemical factories and power plants.

Xian's pollution has reached

imperial proportions. From a high-rise window, visibility is only about half a mile on a winter morning. The smog is worst in the west of the city, where chemical and power industries are concentrated. In the market next to the Xian San De Medical Chemical Branch factory, a woman said: "When it is going to rain, the air goes very thick and things get vague. You can't see a person very far away."

The figures are terrifying. According to Song Zhongjian, the vice-director of the city's Environmental Protection Bureau, every month 25 tonnes of dust falls per square kilometre, most spewed out from Xian's coal-fired industry and domestic heating systems. The annual output of sulphur dioxide has reached 190,000 tonnes; meanwhile, 80 per cent of Xian's domestic waste water flushes straight into the river system.

Yet Xian, the capital of inland Shaanxi province, is by no means the worst in China; in an official 1994 survey, it was placed 14th on the list of most polluted Chinese cities. Across China, the main problems are industrial waste and an overwhelming reliance on coal, which provides three-quarters of the country's energy resources and electricity. Coal consumption, currently at 420 million tonnes a year, is forecast

to rise to 540 million tonnes by 2,000, and 800 million tonnes by 2010.

Xian is a typical Chinese smokestack city. Its 6.7 million residents and the city's industry burn 5 million tonnes of coal a year. Industrial use is high but domestic consumption is also a major factor. Ran Canli, 80, said: "Along my corridor, every household has a coal-fired stove, and when we cook, there is a lot of smoke and dust." Less than one in seven households uses gas-fired heating.

The government knows the answers to these problems, but cannot afford them. The official estimate is that China will have to spend 450bn yuan (£36bn pounds) over the next five years in an environmental clean-up.

Xian, richer than other cities because of its tourist industry, is making a start. A 250-mile pipe is being laid from the gas-fields in northern Shaanxi, and by next July three-quarters of residents should be connected to the system.

A new waste-water treatment factory is being built and by 2,000, Xian wants to be treating half domestic outflows. A day in Xian is almost guaranteed to produce a blinding headache, and even some of the locals are complaining. On the way to the airport, the taxi driver said it was worst in the early evening. "In the rush hour, the cars raise the dust on the road, and the smoke from the factories floats everywhere. In the winter, after it has snowed, you can see dark small particles in the snow. I am worried, but I can't do anything about it because I live here."

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significant shorts

Danish PM survives Rushdie row

Denmark's minority government survived a dispute over a visit by Salman Rushdie that nearly brought it down. Parties which would have held casting votes in a threatened no-confidence vote said the Prime Minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, was inept but not pursuing a hidden agenda, as they had feared. Rushdie was told he could not come to receive a prize because his safety could not be guaranteed. The government then backed down. *Copenhagen - Reuter*

Bhutto allies booted out

President Farooq Leghari of Pakistan sacked the legislature of Sindh province. It is believed he will dismiss all four provincial assemblies, two of which, including Sindh, were controlled by the Pakistan People's Party of Benazir Bhutto, the Prime Minister, who was removed from office earlier this week. *Islamabad - AP*

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JPM 150

EU gravy train must run to new timetable

Katherine Butler
Brussels

Plans for the first clampdown on the lavish expenses and fringe benefits paid to members of the European Parliament could lead to the doubling or trebling of salaries for "low-paid" British MEPs.

Klaus Hänsch, the president of the parliament, yesterday endorsed proposals to harmonise salaries for the 626 Strasbourg MEPs as a prelude to any reform of the widely abused expenses system.

Harmonisation of salaries and restrictions on expenses are likely to benefit 'low-paid' British MEPs

British MEPs are paid the same salary as their Westminster counterparts, £42,000 a year, which is about a quarter of the sums paid Italian or German MEPs, the top earners.

"A single wage is the aim," Mr Hänsch told reporters after a meeting of party leaders summoned to launch the tentative first steps towards an overhaul of the generous perks regime which some MEPs abuse, taking home twice or three times what they earn in basic pay.

The latest move to reform the gravy-train image of the Strasbourg assembly comes after an expose by the ITV documentary programme *The Big Story* of some of the practices which have brought the European Parliament into disrepute.

The Socialist deputy leader, Heey d'Ancona, said it was

A hidden camera was used to show a number of MEPs dining on their £175-a-day meal and accommodation allowance before leaving the building to return home.

One of those caught on camera was a Danish MEP, Poul Iversen, who had been spearheading calls for a crackdown on waste and fraud.

The film has prompted an outcry in Denmark, where the former prime minister and Christian Democrat (conservative) MEP Poul Schleifer is calling for radical cuts in travel and daily allowances.

Mr Hänsch insisted yesterday that only a small minority of MEPs were guilty of misdemeanours and he rejected attempts to tar the institution with the same brush.

He admitted however that the parliament at present did not have the power to discipline those on the fiddle.

He also defended the practice of MEPs absenting themselves from debates or votes on Fridays. "People must travel back to their constituencies and discuss things with the citizens. That is part of the job of an MEP."

Dismissing suggestions of widespread fraud, he hinted that *The Big Story* may have been sponsored by Euro-sceptic elements in Britain.

Its accusations "fit splendidly" he said with the campaign being waged against the EU by the Referendum Party leader, Sir James Goldsmith.

The Socialist group, which represents 200 MEPs, yesterday listed specific reforms that they will back, such as asking MEPs to produce airline tickets before they can be reimbursed for travel.

The Socialist deputy leader, Heey d'Ancona, said it was

An ideological battle within the European Commission over the extent to which governments should legislate to protect workers looks set to rage on following a decision that a controversial report on EU competitiveness will be toned down prior to publication next week, writes Katherine Butler.

The Commission's industry division, headed by Germany's Martin Bangemann, was last night said to be "unhappy" after the majority of Commissioners including Commission President Jacques Santer agreed to publication of the disputed report – but without data which claimed a causal link between unemployment and the cost of firing employees.

European employers and industrialists have accused the Commission of "suppressing" the most contentious chapter of the report because it would advance the case for stripping the EU of labour market rigidities. The timing of the row will fuel Euro-sceptic charges of interference by Brussels in employment matters, coming just days before the EU court ruling on Britain's 48-hour maximum working week. The unpublished draft of the report contains graphs and tables which could be interpreted to prove that labour costs and regulation are heaping costs on EU employers, hampering their ability to compete.

But the social affairs directorate of the Commission claims that the evidence is unreliable because it fails to take account of variables such as the numbers of women in the workforce and the duration of average employment contracts. The disputed draft said the rates of severance pay or the cost of firing workers, higher everywhere in Europe than in the US or Japan, is destroying jobs.

"For every increase of one month in the cost of termination, the employment rate falls by close to two per cent. It appears therefore that high employment costs do indeed lead to cautious recruitment policies. It appears therefore that when termination costs are high firms tend to adopt a cautious re-

"too funny for words" that this off-the-record business practice was not observed.

Stephen and the Socialists too might be pressing for a single rate of pay for the job. "As long as we have salaries which differ so much we will have members who feel they need to be compensated with allowances".

Any move to harmonise salaries is likely however to trigger a backlash at national level, as it would result in some countries, such as Ireland, in MEPs earning more than the prime minister. The lax rules on expenses have traditionally been seen as a way of allowing the lower-paid deputies to redress the in-built discrimination they suffer on salaries.

New chapter: A curator examines Leonardo da Vinci's Codex Leicester at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The manuscript, which is 72 pages long and has sections on astronomy and hydrodynamics, is on loan from the Microsoft billionaire, Bill Gates. Photograph: AP

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obituaries / gazette

William Forrest

William Forrest was the last of the great Fleet Street foreign correspondents; the final echo from that school of remarkable reporters who, along with Hemingway, Arthur Koestler and company, covered the Spanish Civil War with pencils and notebooks and cables filed from posse depots under shell-fire, long before the electronic revolution brought warfare into our sitting rooms.

Forrest was there, on the ground, when Hitler's and Mussolini's dive bombers devastated Guernica to help General Franco's Fascist armies. He was listed by Franco, personally, as a "wanted man" and had he been caught by the Fascists, would certainly have been shot. But they didn't catch Willie Forrest. This diminutive, slightly built, soft-spoken Scot had a pedigree of toughness that was wholly concealed by his warm friendly charm.

Reporting the Spanish Civil War originally for Lord Beaverbrook's *Daily Express*, Forrest was with the Republican forces shortly after the outbreak of fighting in 1936. His accounts of that bloody war were constantly on the front page. Forrest was a Communist Party member before he went to Spain and he never had any doubts as to which side he was on; with or without a rifle he was an anti-Fascist. He was so angered by the failure of the Western powers (and Britain in particular) to support the Republican cause against Franco that he returned to London in 1937 without the approval of his newspaper to plead the cause of the Republicans and, in particular, to lobby Parliament for desperately needed medical aid supplies. Years later, he insisted that this action was the one of which he was most proud.

But Beaverbrook took a different view and denounced him for it. Forrest resigned from the *Express* and walked across Fleet Street to join the *News Chronicle*, which already had a correspondent covering the Spanish war – Arthur Koestler. With Forrest as a reinforcement the *News Chronicle* team in Spain became the most accomplished of all from the British press. On one occasion when Koestler was jailed by Franco's troops Forrest helped to rescue him and almost certainly saved his life.

That was a period when the *News Chronicle* under the editorship of Gerald Barry reflected, more than any other national newspaper, the liberal, radical conscience of a Britain in terrible torment about the growth of fascism in Nazi Germany, Mussolini's Italy and Franco's Spain. The *Daily Herald*, the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Observer* were also marshaled behind that banner – but not to the degree of the *News Chronicle*.

With the outbreak of the Second World War Forrest was an established roving correspondent throughout Europe. Indeed he was actually in the spot when Hitler's Wehrmacht invaded Poland in 1939, just managing to file a pic and escape from being captured, via Romania. Then came the Russo-Finnish war – and with it his break from the Communist Party. Though he remained a deeply committed socialist to the end, his experiences covering the Soviet invasion of Finland – which Stalin justified later by claiming it was in protest Soviet frontiers and border defences – disillusioned him.

Forrest covered the retreat from Dunkirk, then the Eighth Army's Desert campaign (where he was wounded at Tobruk), the Allied landings in Sicily and Salerno, the Normandy landings, the Rhine crossing and the fall of Berlin. He was already a prodigious linguist – self-taught in the main – speaking Russian, Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, French and German, and his grasp of military strategy, indeed the whole cutting of warfare, was the equal of any general. In 1946 Forrest was appointed an OBE.

Not that this wee lad from the outskirts of Glasgow was ever concerned with the baubles.

Forrest was authentic Scottish working-class. His father had been in the drunks trade until his mother, a formidable woman of early Communist conviction, persuaded him that this was immoral and certainly improper for a socialist. So Willie's father became a labourer on a wage barely enough to keep the Forrest family of five in basic food. Young Willie delivered bread and newspapers before going to school each morning and brought home five shillings. He left school at 15 with a choice of three jobs: working for a coal merchant at 10 shillings a week, a job at a flour mill at seven shillings or employment as a copy boy at the *Glasgow Herald* at five shillings and nine pence.

Forrest's mother advised him to take the copy boy job. But when Forrest was taken to see the editor of the *Herald* the great man looked at the boy and said: "Start on Monday as a sub-editor" (there was a great shortage of journalists in Glasgow because of war recruitment in 1917). So Forrest was literally pressed-ganged into journalism.

The post-war years from 1946 onwards Forrest continued as a foreign correspondent, first as the *News Chronicle's* resident man in Paris, but also roving about Europe, and then as the paper's Chief Diplomatic Correspondent. For many years his record as a former Communist meant that he was barred entry into the US and when that was finally relaxed Forrest's sardonic comment was that he appreciated Amer-



Forrest: pedigree of toughness

ica for three things: apple pie, ice water and soft toilet paper.

Willie Forrest never officially retired from journalism. In his late eighties he still contributed to the international periodical *Gemini* and regularly broadcast for the BBC World Service.

When the James Cameron Memorial Trust awarded him the first Emeritus presentation, without a note Willie, then just turned 90, held us all enthralled with an account of his coverage of the Spanish Civil War.

Geoffrey Goodman

William Downie Forrest, journalist: born 21 March 1902; married (one son); died 28 October 1996.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS

BUCHE Noreen, suddenly, on 3 November. Deeply loved by her husband and dearest sister of Norelle. The funeral service will take place at St Paul's, the Actors' Church, Covent Garden on Tuesday 12 November at 1pm. No flowers. Donations if desired to charity; please ask family for details.

IN MEMORIAM

JEPSON Philip. Died in a tragic accident on 29 December 1992. Remembered today by his family and friends on his 28th birthday.

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ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh visit Warwickshire and Stratford-upon-Avon. Princess Margaret, President of the Guide Association, meets the Queen and Prince Philip at the Royal Courts of Justice, the Civic Hall, Walsall, West and North Staffordshire, and North Warwickshire. The Royal Air Force Association holds its annual meeting at the Civic House at Rotherham, South Yorkshire. The Duke of Kent, President, attends an Action Japan Committee dinner and lunch, at the Mayfair Hotel, London SW1.

Changing of the Guard The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment meets the Queen's Life Guards at Horse Guards, 11pm. 1st Battalion Welsh Guards march the Queen's Guard, and the Royal Guards, 11pm. Band provided by the Coldstream Guards.

Birthdays

The Marquess of Abergavenny, former Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex, 82; Lord Allardice, Seafarer of the College of Justice in Scotland, 71; Mr Peter Allison MP, 45; Professor Christian Barnard, heart transplant pioneer, 74; Mr Geoffrey Bell, former chairman, Guinness Mahon Holdings, 57; Alain Delon, actor, 56; Mr Ken Dodd, comedian, 65; Mr Paul Foot, journalist, 59; Miss Elizabeth Gale, opera singer, 48; Mr Edward Goldsmith, ecologist, 88; Mr Frederick Gore, painter, 83; Miss Jane Hawe, actress, 80; Mr Dennis Head, former chairman, Rolls-Royce, 71; Dr Gordon Higginson, former Vice-Chancellor, Southampton University, 67; Miss Nerys Hughes, actress, 55; Mr Michael Jagger, author, 42; Mr David Jenkins, television journalist, 51; Sir Andrew Leggatt, 1st Lord Justice of Appeal, 61; Dennis Mahon, art historian, 86; Miss Patti Page, singer, 69; Mr Martin Peters, footballer, 53; Sir James Redmond, former Director of Engineering, BBC, 78; Mr William Reid, former director of the National Army Museum, 70; Mr Morley Safer, writer and journalist, 65; Sir Robert Sheldes, Professor of Surgery, Liverpool University, 66; Mr Ian Sproat MP, Minister of State, National Heritage, 58; Miss Mary Travers, singer, 59; Mr Tamas Vassary, conductor and pianist, 63; Sir Alexander Waddell, former colonial administrator, 83.

Lectures

Victoria and Albert Museum: Alex Buck, "The Arts and Crafts Legacy: design since 1860", 2.30pm. Tate Gallery: Nicholas Penny in discussion with Alex Foss, "Antiquity and Ideal Beauty", 1pm. Greyfriars College, Barnard's Inn Hall, London EC1: Professor Susan Greenfield, "Exploring the Brain: seeing and hearing", 1pm.

Lady Mayoress of London

The Lady Mayoress of London, Lady Chaltry, was at home yesterday at the Mansion House, London EC4, to members of the Court of Aldermen, Court of Common

Council, representatives of the Church, City and Civic Organisations, the Judiciary and City Livery Companies, and their Ladies.

United Oxford and Cambridge University Club

Sir Bryan Nicholson, Chairman, United Oxford and Cambridge University Club, provided a concert by the Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club given yesterday evening at the Club House, London SW1, to mark the end of Purcell's tercentenary year.

Appointments

Mr John Dudson, to be Ambassador to Mongolia; Mr Philip Eg, to be a member of the Legal Aid Board.

Mr Stephen Esteter, to be a member of the Bankruptcy Registrar in the High Court; Diana, Princess of Wales, to continue as a Master of the Bench of Middle Temple.

Lord Armstrong of Ilminster, to be Chairman of the Police Convalescence and Rehabilitation Trust.

Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following Sabbath begins in London at 4.07pm.

United Synagogue: 0171-387 4300.

Federation of Synagogues: 0181-202 2263.

Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues: 0171-582 1563.

Reform Synagogue: 0181-349 4731.

Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation: 0171-289 2573.

New London Synagogue (Mitsvah): 0171-328 1824.

Anniversaries

Births: Edmond Halley, astronomer and mathematician, 1656; Abraham Brum Stoker, author of *Dracula*, 1847; Herbert, first Baron Austin, 1847; The Queen's Guard, mounted regiment meets the Queen's Life Guards at Horse Guards, 11pm. 1st Battalion Welsh Guards march the Queen's Guard, and the Royal Guards, 11pm. Band provided by the Coldstream Guards.

Agreement over arrears was not new tenancy

LAW REPORT

8 November 1996

On 29 January 1992, the council obtained a 14 days' final order against Miss Burrows for possession of her flat for non-payment of rent and an order for payment of arrears. She was unable to pay the arrears within 14 days but on 5 February the council made an agreement under which she could stay in the flat so long as she paid a sum equivalent to rent and regular payments towards arrears. Had she complied with this agreement, it would have taken her over 14 years to pay off the arrears. But she failed to comply and two years later the council issued a possession warrant which was executed on 8 June 1994.

The Court of Appeal allowed an appeal by Brent London Borough Council against the decision of the Court of Appeal (Law Report, 22 August 1995; [1995] 94 LGR 525) affirming that of Judge Finestane QC, sitting at Wiltshire County Court on 19 August 1992, who declared the plaintiff, Diane Sarah Elizabeth Burrows, to be a secure tenant of a flat owned by the council, and ordered the council to re-admit her to that flat.

The council argued that she

was merely a tolerated trespasser. Although under section 82(2) of the Act the original tenancy ended on 12 February 1992, the court had power under section 85(2) to postpone the date of possession. Section 85(3)(a) envisaged a situation where, although the old tenancy had ended and the tenant remained, the court could, until the original order was executed, vary the possession date thereby reviving the previously defunct tenancy.

If the parties reached an agreement for the tenant's continued occupation during that limbo period, their agreement could and should take effect as intended, i.e. that upon the tenant complying with the conditions the landlord would forgive from executing the order.

There was no need to impute to the parties an intention to create a new tenancy or licence. The retention of possession and payment of rent related to occupation under the old tenancy which was in limbo but which might be revived. In such circumstances it was fair to characterise the tenant as a tolerated trespasser, pending either revival of the old tenancy or breach of the agreed conditions.

Paul McGrath, Barrister

Deaths

BURROWS Noreen, suddenly, on 3 November. Deeply loved by her husband and dearest sister of Norelle. The funeral service will take place at St Paul's, the Actors' Church, Covent Garden on Tuesday 12 November at 1pm. No flowers. Donations if desired to charity; please ask family for details.

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tioneer, 74; Mr Geoffrey Bell,

former chairman, Guinness Mahon Holdings, 57; Alain Delon, actor, 56;

Mr Ken Dodd, comedian, 65; Mr Paul Foot, journalist, 59; Miss Elizabet-

abeth Gale, opera singer, 48; Mr Ed-

ward Goldsmith, ecologist, 88; Mr Freder-

ick Gore, painter, 83; Miss Jane Hawe,

actress, 80; Mr Dennis Head, for-

mer chairman, Rolls-Royce, 71; Dr Gor-

don Higginson, former Vice-Chancellor,

Southampton University, 67; Miss Nerys

Hughes, actress, 55; Mr Michael Jagger,

author, 42; Mr David Jenkins, televi-

sion journalist, 51; Sir Andrew Leg-

gatt, 1st Lord Justice of Appeal, 61;

Dennis Mahon, art historian, 86; Miss

Patti Page, singer, 69; Mr Martin

Peters, footballer, 53; Sir James

Redmond, former Director of

Engineering, BBC, 78; Mr William

Reid, former director of the Na-

tional Army Museum, 70; Mr Morley

Safer, writer and journalist, 65; Sir Robert

Sheldes, Professor of Surgery, Liver-

pool University, 66; Mr Ian

Sproat MP, Minister of State, Na-

tional Heritage, 58; Miss Mary

Travers, singer, 59; Mr Tamas Vassary,

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seeing and hearing", 1pm.

Lord Armstrong of Ilminster, to be

There's no Svengali, just devalued democracy

In Joe Klein's racy novel *Primary Colors* the presidential candidate figure is returned thanks to the efforts of a young aide - whose duties include serving a nightcap to the First Lady. (After she drinks it, she doesn't behave like one.) The character is said to be modelled on George Stephanopoulos, President Clinton's assistant. The novel's assessment of him is less hyperbolic than in real life, where he is variously described as electoral whiz-kid, election winner and polling guru. And now - Cherie, beware - Mr Stephanopoulos is over here, or at least he is telling correspondents in Little Rock that his plans could include a stint advising Tony Blair and Labour. The news seems to have inspired something close to panic. The manipulators are at hand. Our politics is about to succumb to Svengali. Vance Packard (*The Hidden Persuaders*) is about to be vindicated.

All of which is exaggeration and clear evidence that watching *The X-Files* does soften the brain. Mr Stephanopoulos is a clever operator, no dispute, but it wasn't him that won it for the President. To explain Bill Clinton's victory satisfactorily involves the US economic cycle, Newt Gingrich's miscalculation and Bob Dole's age - for a country with an age structure as comparatively young as America's to elect another Ronald Reagan would have indicated an extraordinary deference to

age. Bill Clinton also won because he proved amazingly resilient, because he was able to cohabit successfully with a Republican Congress and because he made astute choices among campaign tactics and staff. American voters did not select some phantasm created by psychological boffins; they voted for an all-too-human candidate with the resources of incumbency plus a great gift for empathy, and the ability to communicate on the box almost as convincingly as he does in the flesh.

Bill Clinton pursued political office since he was a student; he is a professional politician. Tony Blair is a lawyer only as a courtesy title - politics is his vocation. Ditto John Major and the rest. We can and ought, in a democracy, to say we expect those who seek office to hold to certain values, to see clearly that good ends do not justify bad means. But that does not amount to some endorsement of amateurism in the pursuit of office. We have seen enough of Westminster's failures to dismiss the Eighties' assertion that somehow the public interest would be better served by people lacking the skills of leadership and persuasion which make for success in democratic politics. And professional politicians have every right to reach for professional advice - on the workings of the mass media, on polling, on measuring and moving public opinion, on what we call, for want of a better term, "image" - the layered

perceptions of personality and party. Too often, still, people conceive of democracy in simplistic terms, as if we were Athenians standing on a hill sticking up our hands. New techniques of projection have to be mastered. Politics, in short, is an accomplished business. What is surprising is not that there has grown up in recent times a body of people practised in it, but that we should be so shabby about their contribution.

So Mr Stephanopoulos, if he comes to Walworth Road, is welcome. But the idea that even this former Rhodes scholar can master, in months, the British politico-media system is unlikely.

"Smarmy" does not even exist as a word in American English. Besides, the home-spun spinners are, some of them, pretty good at the game, too. It suits Peter Mandelson, to pick a name more or less at random, to be called Mephistophelean - but we should not be persuaded that he is in truth an evil spirit. A little wicked at times, maybe, but not a force of darkness. All leaders need eyes and ears and hit men. Mr Mandelson attracts controversy not so much through his effectiveness, but because he symbolises the changed constitution of the Labour Party.

No - the real problem is not spin-

doctors, strategists and their like: it is what Lord Nolan identified yesterday as the declining value of politics that should really alarm us. Look at this paper's story yesterday morning, showing that 2 million eligible people, for one reason or another, will not even be on the voting register. Some of that is circumstance, but a lot of it is dismissive despair. No one can be entirely comfortable with the state of British democracy, and that is before worrying about the functioning of the House of Commons. But the public's antennae seem nowadays no less finely attuned to exhibitions of insincerity or incredibility by politicians. An army of spin doctors are not going to be able to obscure basic issues from the public view. It may suit both parties to try to hide the looming question of European Monetary Union but no amount of smoke will obscure the daily evidence of (favourable to the Tories) economic revival or (unfavourable) social dislocation and wasted human potential. Perhaps, to cite this week's trivial example, some people some of the time might be put off voting Labour because of Tony Blair's hair, or his stage manner. An image-maker might make some difference to that. But most of the people cannot really be fooled most of the time: they assess trivial and profound factors all the time, but they make their own proper sense of what politicians, including their image-makers,

are up to. We should not worry unduly about the effect of Mr Stephanopoulos, nor our home-grown versions. We should worry, instead, about electors' increasing disaffection on one side, and the questionable behaviour of MPs accompanied by their declining political influence on the other, and ponder how far these two developments may be connected. PR folk can spin their webs, but they cannot obscure the shadier corners of our shabby constitution.

Is this an opinion?

Well, that's it then. No need to look any further. Scientists at Cambridge have found the answer. And it is, as *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* said all along: 42.

But hold on one nit-picking minute. Doesn't this call to mind that infamous philosophy final paper question, which went: "Is this a question?" The best essay in response read simply: "Yes; if this is an answer." Now we're told that the answer to life, the universe and everything is 42. But "life, the universe and everything" isn't a question, is it? And even if it were, would 42 be an answer? We, at least, are determined to remain unresolved on this matter.



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TELEPHONE 0171-293 2000 / 0171-345 2000 FAX 0171-293 2485 / 0171-345 2435

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Oxford will not shun Said's gift

Sir: The Congregation of Oxford University did indeed vote against allocating a particular site to the new business school which hopes to receive the massive benefaction of Waife Said but did not vote against the business school as such, nor against Mr Said, nor against the benefaction ("Oxford does vote against business school project," 6 November).

Most of the 260 who voted against the proposal to let this particularly sensitive site be used were moved by concern about the undertaking made by Congregation over 30 years ago to leave the site green "in perpetuity". Some objected to the secrecy which had shrouded the project for a year or two and/or failed to understand the reason for this (that Mr Said wanted to avoid embarrassment to his son, who had been a student here). Some were worried that the foundation which would govern the business school might become aloof from the general democracy of dons by which all the affairs of Oxford are run: some that the university staff would lose a cherished set of sports facilities. Only one individual, reported by you, delivered a tirade against the real or imagined business dealings of the benefactor. Most speakers, on both sides, expressed gratitude for the money on offer.

Most of those present were satisfied that these qualms were either misplaced or were being answered. It seems at least to me that the vote will not result in any long-term set-back to the development of Business Studies which has been established for many years now at this university. And if the views of the wider university community were tested in a postal vote it is likely that the decision would go a different way.

The problem was that a decision in a great matter was being pivoted upon the change of use of a cricket pitch, and a coalition developed of disparate objectives. It would be unfortunate if Mr Said or the members of his foundation abreacted as a result of the set-back after devoting so much time and energy to this project. Oxford values its democracy more highly than its short-term reputation and the result, very frequently, is that people inside this place as well as outside, receive slaps in the face when a warm embrace would be more immediately welcome. But in due course, great projects are brought off and objections subside and the debate is seen to have enriched rather than impoverished the ultimate result.

ANTHONY SMITH

President

Magdalen College, Oxford



How De Valera outwitted Collins

Sir: Brendan O'Neill (Letters, 2 November) misses the point about Collins and De Valera. It is not a question of either being a hero or the other a traitor. There was, in fact, no difference of principle at all between them. It was simply a case of De Valera being the wiser politician of the two.

Both Collins and De Valera were Irish nationalists, seeking as far as possible to eliminate the British presence from Ireland. Both recognised that the 1921 treaty represented the best that they could get in that direction. However, both also realised that it fell far short of what their more romantic colleagues expected. Who would have known the news to them?

De Valera won. It was Collins who got the poisoned chalice. Once the treaty had been signed, De Valera was left free to wash his hands of it and denounce Collins for a "betrayal" of the cause - despite the fact that, in Collins's place, he would have done no differently.

It made not the slightest difference which actor got cast as the Saviour in the nationalist passion play, and which as Judas. The play would have ended the same way.

MICHAEL W STONE

Peterborough

Sir: Brendan O'Neill says Neil Jordan, director of the film *Michael Collins*, has "rewritten Irish history". Such a reappraisal is long overdue.

If de Valera was the hero who stuck to his guns, how was it that he was, only four years after Collins's death, to "ditch his principles" and take the oath of allegiance to the British Crown which enabled him to enter the Dail? Towards the end of his long life, after many years as Taoiseach and later President, he said in private: "In the fullness of time history will record the greatness of Collins, and it will be recorded at my expense." But he never had the generosity of spirit to acknowledge publicly his debt to Collins, and the latter's role as a founding father of the Republic of Ireland.

CAROL PLACKETT

Newcastle Upon Tyne

Lottery U-turn?

Sir: You quote Virginia Bottomley (report, 6 November) as saying that Lottery money had to be taken into account when assessing the Government's record of expenditure on the arts. Two years ago, the Prime Minister stated at an English Heritage conference that "the money raised by the Lottery will not replace existing government spending". Has there been a U-turn, or will he ensure that the Budget restores grants to their levels of two years ago?

STEVE ADAMS

London NW3

Nae chance

Sir: A few weeks ago, hoardings around Scotland proclaimed "Nae Tartan Tax with the Tories". Now we are being blessed with "You'll pay pail with Mr Blair".

I assume the Conservatives and their advertising agency have some idea that they can appeal to Scots as tight-lipped versions of Rab C Nesbit. Until they start communicating to us in a civilised manner, they are not likely to gain many new supporters.

BRIAN MATHIESON

Hamilton, South Lanarkshire

Pakistan crippled by feudalism

Sir: I left Pakistan one day ahead of the dismissal of Benazir Bhutto. The news came as no surprise.

I have been visiting Pakistan for 15 years and have never known the people so dispirited about the political, economic and moral state of the country. Life is increasingly difficult for those on salaries and pensions and the rise in the price of basic necessities is disastrous for the poor. Law and order has collapsed in Karachi and corruption is rampant everywhere. Educated young people are angry and frustrated and talk of emigrating. A simple change of government

will solve nothing. While the main parties are dominated by feudal lords who deliver the votes of the peasants who work on their vast estates, elections cannot represent the will of the people. It is the feudal system that lies at the root of the glaring social inequities. The most urgent need is for land reform.

There will have to be a French Revolution before democracy means anything in Pakistan. Meanwhile, it is tragic to watch the breakdown of that beautiful country, potentially so rich in material resources and human talent.

ZOE HERSON
London NW3

Planning to beat nurse shortage

Sir: A commitment to more funds for the NHS is always welcome ("Dorell wins £1 bn more for NHS," 5 November). However, in addition to funding there are two basic issues which need to be addressed.

Firstly, bed shortages. This really means there is a shortage of registered nurses to care for patients. There are not enough nurses being recruited, and those that are there are set to retire in increasing numbers as the century ends. The solution is to plan ahead; establish a workforce planning system that recognises the value of registered nurses and ensures there are enough in the system to meet demand.

Second, we are likely to see even more patients waiting in accident and emergency departments this winter before being given a bed. The Government has gone so far as to establish a system to monitor the

availability of specialist beds. The RCN has published a six-point plan which, if implemented, would avoid the problems arising in all sectors.

For example, hospitals should appoint bed managers - usually nurses with the authority to cut across departmental boundaries and manage admissions to the wards. Those that have already adopted this system have reported reduced waiting times. We wait to see if this and our other suggestions will be taken up.

CHRISTINE HANCOCK
General Secretary
Royal College of Nursing
London W1

Sir: Jonathan Ferrier is right ("Who wants to be a family doctor?", 1 November). The quality of GP care is one of the outstanding achievements of the NHS. However, GPs declined to be salaried employees like their colleagues in hospitals and public health.

Standards initially rose, and the ablest doctors were attracted to general practice. There were often bitterly disappointed candidates in the 1980s who could not gain access to the official vocational training schemes, which were heavily oversubscribed.

The invention of fund-holding may have been perceived as an advantage at first, but has become bogged down in bureaucracy. However, this deterioration in conditions was not necessary. GPs could (and many did) decline to join what was clearly intended to be an inequitable system, forming instead non-fund-holding consortia.

to organise resources and access to secondary health care.

It is in all our interest to see the attractiveness of primary health care careers restored, but this must mean undoing the damage of the "internal market" and its hefty administration costs.

Britain has never produced enough of its own doctors, and general practice must suffer if hospital medicine or some other job altogether are seen as infinitely more appealing.

Dr MALCOLM C BATESON
Bishop Auckland, Co Durham

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threats were made against me. I said I would tell someone in the Foreign Office whom I knew.

I did refuse to sign the prepared statement which retracted my evidence. I consulted the only person close to me in Britain at that time - my mother - and she advised against signing. I mistrusted the people asking me to retract, firstly because I thought it wholly futile and secondly because I feared entrapment.

However, I did sign a statement saying my evidence was unreliable because it was obtained under duress.

John Harris sent a message through Amnesty to me from death row in Pretoria saying that he understood and forgave me. His wife Ann repeated that message when she spoke to me a few months later in London. The depth of that undeserved forgiveness moved me profoundly. I saw John in a different light and I came to regret bitterly that I had not been stronger or wiser.

JOHN LLOYD
London WC2

Sir: There are a number of issues in your story headed "Ex-Labour candidate drops threat" (25 October) which I would like to clarify.

No message of warning was smuggled in to me in my solitary confinement cell. Only my mother communicated with me in that way, which she did by wrapping messages in greaseproof paper and inserting them into a thermos flask. I was not released from 90 days' detention for giving evidence for the prosecution against John Harris. At that stage, I saw him through the eyes of my captors and torturers as a murderer.

I did not threaten in Britain in March 1965 to tell the South African police that I was being asked to perjure myself by retracting my evidence. When MARK BASSETT
New Malden, Surrey

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analysis

Can you be sure of Ken Saro-Wiwa?

When the Nigerian dissident and eight others were hanged a year ago, the West cast him as a hero and Shell as the villain. Richard D North, in Port Harcourt, tells a different story

A year ago this weekend, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists were hanged by the Nigerian authorities. This African, fighting for the rights of the indigenous poor of his minority tribe as, so he claimed, they were raped by the Anglo-Dutch corporation Shell, was the epitome of the Anglicised product of Empire.

Thanks to the interest taken in Saro-Wiwa by organisations such as Greenpeace, The Body Shop and Channel Four Television, his story is well known. He became a founding member of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (Mosop) in 1990; in 1995, Amnesty International denounced the detentions and trials of Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni detainees as "politically motivated". Amnesty deplored the ill-treatment of all the detainees and many of the witnesses at the military-controlled tribunal, and the government's inaction about a spate of security-force killings in Ogoniland in 1993 and 1994, in which hundreds of people died.

Eventually, the campaign forced the oil company Shell, whom Saro-Wiwa accused of implication in the rape of Ogoniland, to undertake the first environmental study of the Niger Delta.

The affair may have made little impression on the Nigerian government, but Shell was

shaken to the core. The company's self-esteem, always dangerously inflated, was shattered. The affable and savvy sitcom writer and campaigner was pipe-smoking and poshly-spoken; he owned a large house in Surrey and sent a son to Eton. He was either a naive hero indifferent to risk or a flawed maverick who made fatal misjudgements. "Ken was no saint," says Donu Kogbara, a London-based Ogoni journalist friend of his. "He was tremendously charismatic and sometimes very nice," she remembers. But she believes that he lost touch with reality as he was wooed by starry names in Europe and the US.

Ken Saro-Wiwa became a darling of the greener sections of London liberal society, but had been on the federal side during the Biafran civil war, and would thus have been reviled by liberals then. It has been argued that he was a federalist because he thought only a strong state could defend minorities like the Ogoni.

Whatever the case, within Nigeria it is widely believed to have feathered his nest when managing the Niger delta oil port of Bonny during the civil war. It would certainly explain his sudden affluence at that time. If he was a crook, it is no more than Nigerians expect of each other.

Saro-Wiwa finally and fatally enraged his country's military regime by demanding greater autonomy for the people living in a patch of the swampy Niger delta. Given the politics of the country, the more strident of these voices were bound to be silenced. He seems to have been caught out by the military's haphazard alternations between permissiveness and oppression. And he did not help his cause by unleashing undisciplined and deeply disaffected young men on moderate former colleagues in the struggle, four of whom were murdered at a political rally in Ogoniland. Donu Kogbara believes her own father, one of the moderate leaders, was lucky to escape with his life. "I'm accusing Ken of incitement to murder," Donu Kogbara insists, when pressed.

Saro-Wiwa certainly believed that the campaign was a useful route to fame and wealth, and told friends that because it had an environmental dimension it pushed all the right buttons in the West. The mystery is how anything that started out as something with at least an element of a scam about it could have turned so darkly tragic.

His campaign was successful because it was directed almost as much at the Shell oil giant as it was at Nigeria's regime. Shell was the obvious target, for an ironic reason, as most of its Nigerian critics freely admit: the oil company is perhaps the most respectable institution in Nigeria.

"We've been here a long

time, and we expect to be here a long time," says Brian Anderson, the Nigerian-born white who runs Shell's operations there.

Shell started producing oil from the Niger delta 40 years ago. It was in Nigeria when the place was one of the bright stars of the continent, and expects to be there, when, and if hope returns. Meanwhile, like any large firm there, it funds armed police seconded from the state for the defence of its people, and necessarily deals with authorities of whom it strongly disapproves. Shell remains adamant that its only purchase of arms has been strictly within government-agreed codes.

Saro-Wiwa realised that Shell was amenable to pressure. It operates as a 30 per cent shareholder, and the largest private shareholder, in a Nigerian joint venture company, Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), alongside Elf and Agip, with the Nigerian state oil company owning 55 per cent. You see the Shell sign everywhere in the delta, but it stands over facilities substantially owned by the Nigerian state, which must put in 55 per cent of the capital expenditure required to keep pro-

duction flowing – and clean. Shell's biggest problem is in wringing that share from the state.

SPDC produces about a million barrels of oil a day, half the country's total, which in a good year contributes around \$9bn dollars to the national exchequer; or three-quarters of the total government revenue (and about a third of the economy's GNP). Some of the money is siphoned away by the country's leadership and their friends.

Little of it reaches the delta where it is produced, and where six million people live in a soggy region of farms, forests and swamp about the size of the Republic of Ireland. Even less than its fair share reaches Ogoniland, where half a million of Saro-Wiwa's compatriots live in an area of about 1,000sq km.

The lively Nigerian economist Patrick Utomi once proposed that the oil ought to be given to the ruling élite once and for all: in return, they might give Nigeria back to the people. The Economist Intelligence Unit's regional report notes that the country's economy collapsed during the oil boom: too many important players gave up conventional work and concentrated on trying

to cream off a share of the bonanza.

Arguably, none of this is Shell's fault: as Brian Anderson never fails to stress, 3 per cent of the revenue that SPDC pays the government was supposed to come back to the producing areas. It's a sum close to

Shell's 3.2 per cent share of the oil dollar, and is a sliver of the

back to front here," says Anderson. "The government's in the oil business and we're in local government." He believes that privatisation is inevitable in the end, and looks forward to it.

Flying over the delta in a Shell helicopter for hundreds of miles, and visiting several noted pollution hotspots as well as observing a dozen or so oil pro-

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A guy called Shirley and a girl called Sam



Miles
Kington

I once knew a BBC presenter who was a bit of a name-dropper. Actually, he was a lot of a name-dropper. He was such a name-dropper that he hated to admit there was anyone he did not know or had not met. Once he was in a conversation in which the name of Francis Wheen came up, and he was asked if he knew Francis.

"Oh yes," he said. "She and I have often worked together."

As Francis Wheen is a man, this was generally considered to be an own goal.

How we all laughed. But I know how that man felt now, because the same sort of thing has happened to me. Last week I referred to the obscure American poet Joyce Kilmer, now chiefly remembered for the poem starting "I think that I shall never see/A poem lovely as a tree", and said that I knew nothing about her life.

Immediately letters started flooding in saying (in tones not unlike William Brown's) that I obviously knew nothing about life at all if I thought that Joyce Kilmer was a woman because Joyce Kilmer was a man, gosh, we thought everyone knew that Joyce Kilmer was a man, what about Joyce Cuy, he was a man and he was called Joyce, fancy not knowing that Joyce Kilmer was a man, we thought everyone knew that Joyce Kilmer was a man ...

I printed a retraction and a semi-grovelling apology but still the letters came, so I think I must stand up for myself and say that if men insist on having women's names and vice versa, they can't be surprised if mistakes do occasionally occur. I myself was misled from an early age when it comes to

the name Joyce, as the only Joyce I ever knew was my great-aunt Joyce, and she was definitely a woman. She was also the only woman I knew who always smoked when she did the washing up, but in the 1950s that didn't seem too bad, somehow. The thing is that she was called Joyce and she was a woman, and she was the only Joyce in my world, so I assumed naturally that people called Joyce were women.

What made me even more confused, though I didn't realise it at the time, was that Auntie Joyce was married to a man with a girl's name. My great-uncle was called Evelyn. He was the only Evelyn I ever met, and the only other one I ever heard of was Evelyn Waugh, so it seemed natural to assume that people called Evelyn were men ...

I printed a retraction and a semi-grovelling apology but still the letters came, so I think I must stand up for myself and say that if men insist on having women's names and vice versa, they can't be surprised if mistakes do occasionally occur. I myself was misled from an early age when it comes to

to people, there was no need for a conversation like this: "Have you met Evelyn and Joyce?"

"No. Delighted. Which of you is which?"

"Now I do realise that Evelyn Glennie is not a man. In fact, she does not even pronounce her name the same as my great-uncle. He was Eave-lyn and she is Eev-lyn. I know this because I once heard her correct Ned Sherin over the pronunciation of her name on *Loose Ends*, and it is one of the great mysteries of the modern age that a supposedly profoundly deaf drummer can hear a single syllable being mispronounced ..."

Personally, I blame the women. They have been taking over men's names as quietly and insidiously as they have been taking over trousers and jeans. Samantha Fox can call herself Sam Fox and get away with it, even if she sounds like a missing brother for Edward and James Fox. You can be a female poet called Stevie Smith and you can be a female actress called Billie Whitelaw but a man has to stick to a man's

name, so that when I first came across a song that started "Frankie and Johnny were lovers", I had to wait for a while to find out which was the man and which was the woman.

(That was in the innocent 1950s again. Nowadays you would have to wait to find out if Frankie and Johnny were both men or both women.)

Another name with sexual ambiguity is Shirley, which can belong to a woman, as in Shirley Williams or to a man, as in ... well, Shirley Brooks is the only example I can readily think of, he being a long-forgotten editor of *Punch*. I have also met girls who preferred to be called Charlie and several women who preferred to be called Jo and I think I once met a girl who said she liked to be called Andy, though I may have misheard her.

But I have only once in my life met a couple who had got the problem solved for once and for all, for the simple reason that they both had the same name.

He was called Robin. So was she. Nobody could ever get them mixed up.



country's average 75 per cent share of the barrel's worth. If the arrangement had worked, the delta might have become a fine area in a fine country.

"The money was not fully spent, and if it wasn't wisely spent" Anderson notes, speaking in a code which roughly translates as: the money which isn't stolen is wasted.

A meeting with local chiefs at Sapele township in the north-west of the delta has the erudite community spokesman Vin Mathias Elankoro rattling off a list of health and environmental effects, many of which probably aren't real or could not be caused by the oil industry. After the meeting, and in private, a local chief thanks the Shell people for the scholarships, the education schemes, the community hospitals and all the rest that the company has done locally – and much of it long before the disturbances of the early Nineties. He wants more, and knows that in a better society politics, not begging, would sort things out. He does not say – but it's true – that community leaders are usually as keen to cream off their share of the booty as anyone else.

Shell spends about \$20m a year on community projects (and eight times more on environmentally-oriented equipment renewal). "Things are

production facilities and, crucially, the water and ground around them – it is hard to see what the environmental fuss has been about. In the delta there are many rivers and creeks where there is an oil sheen. They remain a tiny minority, and the spills may as well have been caused by careless local boozing as by the oil giant. For the most part, the delta is a vast, watery, deeply verdant region, lying under skies that are ordinarily tropical. Shell occupies a third of 1 per cent of the delta: even if it had devastated that area and 10 times more besides, and it hasn't, the damage would be a fraction of what is routinely claimed by campaigners.

What, then, of the famous flares? First, there are none at all in Ogoniland, where there has been no oil production since 1993, following community disturbances. Elsewhere in the delta, about a hundred flares waste a resource equivalent to a quarter of France's gas demand.

The flares do very little useful work, and they have been castigated by green commentators. Because oil production facilities bring people with money, locals congregate wherever SPDC has kit. Some come to live near flares, which constitute free light and a means of drying root crops such as cassava.

SPDC is committed,

rightly so, to putting out all the flares, if possible by 2008, and about a quarter of them within three years. The latest project to harness around a quarter of the wasted gas involves deals with customers in southern Europe and \$5.5bn worth of new plant whose financing was highly problematic, not least because the Nigerian government, already heavily in arrears in its payments to SPDC, had difficulty raising its share.

The scheme has been an on-and-off affair for 20 years, but is now under construction. The deal was agreed in the weeks following Saro-Wiwa's execution, and seemed to some a symbol of Shell's venality.

For Anderson, the position is simple: if Shell pulled out of Nigeria, someone less committed would go in. The gas scheme was a sign of progress, not failure. On the revenue-addicted economy, he comments, "The 'curse of oil' is a real issue – but it has brought a lot of good things. I believe very strongly that by being here we offer something for them to choose from." Besides, he adds: "No country in the world has ever left oil in the ground." This is not the observation of an angel, but there seem to be few angels in this story.

It is hard to imagine any country extracting oil from the delta with less damage. What is harder to sense is whether Shell has been canny – still less, whether it has been at all noble – in its arm-twisting in the Nigerian corridors of power. Certainly Shell could have done better. But would any company have done better than Shell?

Sex

الراحل

Cancel that invite to the virtual dinner party



Hamish McRae

In the land of the Internet, people have to meet each other more, not less. Personal contact remains king

The more we move into the electronic age, the more people want to meet real people. I happened to be in the United States earlier this week on the day of the presidential election and what struck me as most interesting was not the themes the commentators were hanging on about – the likely turnout, or the support for Clinton among women – but rather the way the final days of the campaign were fought.

Thus Bob Dole, aged 73, was widely applauded for spending the last 96 hours whizzing round America without even stopping for a couple of hours' sleep, making scores of five-minute speeches to supporters, before getting back on to the plane. The President's schedule was only slightly less frantic. It was not relevant that the vast bulk of the nation's voters could never be reached in this way, and that they merely saw a series of clips on the TV that happened to come from different bits of America. Nor was it relevant that a whole array of new interactive technology enables ordinary people to communicate with politicians. In the land of the Internet, personal contact remains king.

By chance, I came across two other examples of the way in which the more advanced the technology, the greater the evident need for personal contact. I was trying, never having done it before, to travel back by Concorde – trying because 45 minutes out from New York an engine failed and the poor thing had to dump fuel and struggle back to Kennedy with, so to speak, its tail between its legs.

The experience encouraged a certain camaraderie among the passengers and it transpired that the American executive next to me had a schedule of Dole-like rigour. He had already had two other meetings in different US cities that morning using a company jet which delivered him to the Concorde ramp. He was then going to pick up another company jet at Heathrow to take him to Berlin by 2am, ready for a 8am presentation. The previous week he had been in Australia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China. He looked perfectly fit on it, but confessed that it was a dreadful way of living. Yet his company, one of the great hi-tech multinationals, was in such fierce competition that this was what he had to do. Telecommunications were not enough; he had to be there in person.

The other example concerns the BT-MTI takeover. News of this leaked towards the end of last week, forcing the companies to bring forward the announcement. How? Well, it seems that about six weeks ago a group of more than a dozen BT executives went to New York. They were spotted in the BA first-class lounge at Kennedy by a London analyst, who thought odd that they should be breaking normal commercial practice by having all the senior management on one plane. He reckoned that there must be a very big deal brewing. This suspicion

was confirmed a couple of weeks later when they were spotted again. It could only be one of four possible deals, and the investment bank concerned correctly guessed which one it was – and told its clients, who filled their boots with the stock.

You see the point: a giant takeover between these two communications companies required the physical presence of a large number of its senior people in the same place. They would have had available the most sophisticated electronic communications technology in the world, but that would not have done the job. The people had to meet.

So it is almost as though the electronic age, far from reducing the need for perso-to-person contact, may actually increase it. In a way, this is comforting. It is good to know that we are not heading into a world of virtual dinner parties, sitting thousands of miles apart and toasting each other on video screens. In the business world, the process of internationalisation, made possible by better communications, means that people have to meet each other more, not less.

Or rather, some people need to meet more. And this is also disturbing, because this growing need for personal contact is associated with the growing disparities in our society: what one might call the performance culture, or the star society. It is now widely recognised that there has been an enormous surge in demand for the services of a few people – the top doctors, lawyers, film stars, financial analysts, politicians, and so on – while the demand for the rest, even the good average performer, has fallen away. For someone with below-average skills, the outlook is bleaker still.

So people who come into this star category find themselves having to race around, trying to satisfy all these demands on their time. The fact that Bob Dole could appear on millions of TV screens increased the demand for him to appear in person, not the reverse.

At our own forthcoming election, the party leaders will have to race around in their hired planes followed by aides, boosters and critics. No one will be interested in some third-rate MP in a boring constituency. Our top business people will continue to race around, busier and busier, while their companies "downsize" the middle management. The fees of our top entertainers will soar as they sell to the global market, while the ranks of resting actors will swell.

Solution? I have none, because the pressures that have created the star society will grow for the foreseeable future. But we can perhaps lean against it, by making up our own minds as to what constitutes merit – which people are "real". Amateur actors can give enjoyable performances, middle management matters, and I know at least one "foot-soldier" MP who has wonderful, thoughtful ideas.

If image-making and media manipulation took place at it

Blair can keep his romance and flowers

by Suzanne Moore



In the real world, women are pushing forward. We vote not on the basis of shagability, but on the basis of credibility



once did – behind closed doors – it would be a different matter, yet the fact that all this tarting up is done in public simply increases female suspicion. This is hardly surprising, since women are the experts in masquerade. Femininity itself is a game that women learn to play from early on. It is not that women judge by appearances alone. Rather, we understand the work and motivation that has gone into changing appearances, and are therefore not entirely fooled by them.

More importantly, however, Blair may not be appealing to many women voters because of his desperation to appeal to a small section of them. A campaign to woo the conservative women of Middle England is backfiring. The emphasis on family values, the presentation of Blair and his happy brood in their smart but casual clothing, his views on abortion, his pontifications about morality, leave as many of us cold. The words smarmy, smarmy, self-satisfied, are used again and again. What Blair's advisers (all male apart from a couple of "safe women", such as Harriet Harman and Tessa Jowell) fail to realise is that if anything unites women it is that they know what it is like to be patronised and they don't respond well to it.

To be told, then, that we are to be further targeted because a couple of focus groups have become dissatisfied is not good news. The gap between politics as it is played out and the rest of life grows ever wider. Even the modernisers of the Labour Party appear to live in the 1950s, seemingly unable to distinguish between sex appeal and the appeal of men who are at ease with women. This homogenous group of female voters that decides elections on the basis of fanciability does not exist. When polled, women actually are interested in competence and the ability to manage the economy, just as they are concerned

with health, education and social issues. (Gosh, I'm almost making them sound like men. That can't be right, can it?)

What many modern women respond to, though – and I think they have responded to it in Clinton as they did with John Smith – is the appeal of a man who is comfortable with women, powerful women, whether they be colleagues, wives, advisers. Blair has fallen down here. His inner circle is male, the press machinery is run by men, and the cracks are beginning to show. Stroppy women are relegated in favour of Harman-like clones, as unthreatening as they are unexciting. Clare Short is immensely popular, and if any of them dared to look outside the narrow world of Westminster they could quite easily see the kind of women that other women like are people like Patsy in *Ab Fab* – a drunken slut. The blathering of the Blair agenda unfortunately means that someone like Patsy will never be Minister for Health. A shadow Cabinet that can manage to patronise Barbara Castle – isn't she amazingly boshie for a little old lady – doesn't bode well for any of us.

Once in power, Blair, we are promised, will loosen up a little. Another makeover beckons. Maybe he will even stop grinning. Yet for all the packaging, some of us remain interested in the contents of his package. We don't care about his flyaway hair as much as we do about child care, about public transport, about pensions, about the minimum wage. These are not "women's issues", whatever that means. They are merely issues that affect more than half the population. There is nothing more off-putting than being deliberately wooed by an administration offering "female-friendly" policies. We don't want government to be friendly to us, we want to be part of it, which is a different thing altogether. All this talk appears incredibly old-fashioned, as though women were passively waiting to be given a few little treats to keep us happy. Why doesn't the Labour Party just send us all flowers, chocolate and perfume while they retire to the smoking room to talk about what is important?

In the real world, women are pushing forward and, shocking as it seems, we vote not on the basis of "shagability" but on the basis of credibility. Who is unattractive about Blair, whether it's his hair or his teeth, can be cosmetically corrected. His conscience, I fear, requires deep and painful surgery.

Sextop for sale



Louise Levene tastes a jar of chocolate body paint

painting it on with the special brush provided? Where's the spontaneity in that? Besides, heating it up sounds dodgy – as anyone who has ever been scalded by a spoonful of ganache will testify.

Chocolate-coated sex is definitely a high-risk activity. Do the deed near an open window and wasp bites become a

nasty possibility. Allergic reactions can't be ruled out. People may not get as embarrassed as they used to about going to the doctors with personal matters but "intra-prepuberal erythema due to atopic chocolate allergy" is going to look pretty silly on your face.

The allergy might manifest itself in other ways. Chocolate is a major cause of migraine. Remember: "Not tonight darling, last night gave me a headache."

Sex and sweets have enjoyed a longstanding association, from the traditional heart-shaped box of chocolates through to cherry lip gloss and flavoured condoms. Condom flavouring is a surprisingly unsophisticated area. Scrupulous market research by Durex into the flavour preferences of the average condom user have led them to settle on strawberry, banana, ice mint and tangerine. Not exactly the peak of adult sophistication, indeed, this infantile menu might easily be the flavour range for Punch and Judy toothpaste.

Of course, just because people buy a product doesn't mean they do any more than stick it on a shelf – people bought *The Scream* poster but they didn't necessarily take it to bed. The mere fact that silly women with more money than sense treat their friends to a jar of smearing chocolate rather than a set of novelty frige magnets/Garfield knickers should not lead us to draw conclusions about the nation's sexual preferences.

People who are genuinely addicted to the practice of licking foodstuffs off their near-and-dear (rather than those who are simply addicted to buying useless presents) probably use ordinary household ingredients anyway. Nutella makes a very acceptable substitute (they tell me) but the most interesting alternative must surely be Ice Magic, the chocolate ice-cream topping that hardens on contact ... Anyone for seconds?

Smarm: the complete guide

Ingratiating, crawling, fawning, servile, obsequious, sycophantic, suave, smooth, oily, unctuous. What a change a few hairs can make. Those are the words listed in *Chambers Combined Dictionary Thesaurus* as synonyms for "smarmy", the currently fashionable epithet for Tony Blair, who only recently was being described as "dictatorial".

Occurrences of the word "smarmy" in our database of national newspapers include 21 sightings in the vicinity of "Blair". Smarmy scores for other politicians include eight for John Major, six for Heseltine, four for Howard, three each for Thatcher and Kenneth Clarke, two for Portillo, and one each for Bottomley and Prescott. Even "Monkhouse" only scores nine on the smarmy scale.

Furthermore, while those scores have been accumulated over three years, Blair's smarminess has mainly happened in the past few weeks. Until the end of September, his total was only seven, with 14 additional sightings since 1 October.

The rise in smarmy Blair has coincided with a sudden decline in dictatorial Blair. In July alone, the database shows 14 instances of "dictatorial" in the same paragraph as "Blair", with another five in August and eight in September. Yet since 1 October there has been only one more sighting. April may be the cruellest month, but October and November are the smarmiest.

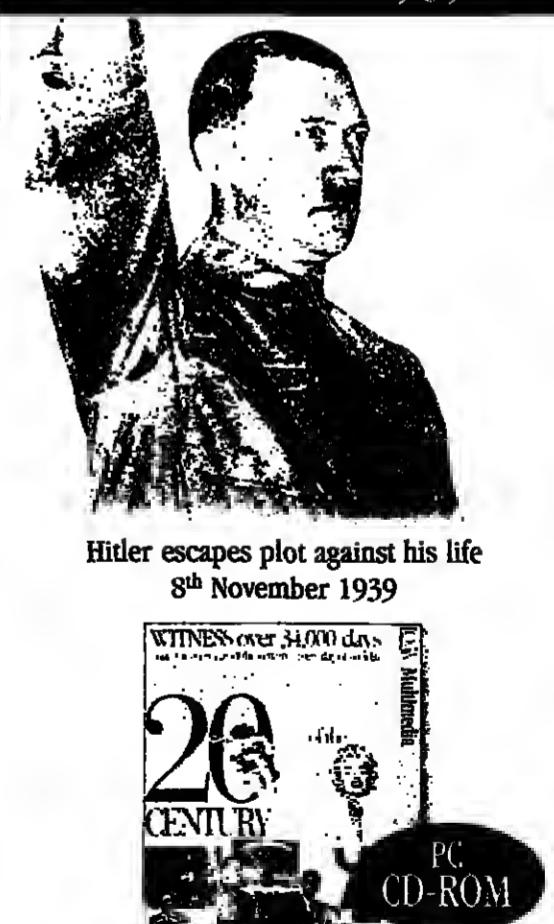
"Smarmy" is not among the 38 words or phrases in Erskine May's list of unparliamentary expressions. You cannot call an Hon-

able Member a "cad", "coward" or "criminal", nor even a "cheeky young pup" in the House of Commons without expecting the Chair to intervene, but you might get away with "smarmy" – unless, of course, the Speaker considered it no better than "pecksniffian cant" which was deemed to be unparliamentary in 1928.

Smarmy, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, dates back to 1909 as an adjectival form of the word "smarm" or "smalm" which had been around for 100 years. Originally just a verb for smoothing, especially of hair, its meaning gradually moved to include the implication of a real smoothie. Its colloquial nature seems to have prevented it entering the more respectable dictionaries of quotations. We found no reference in Antony Jay's *Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations*, or Jonathan Green's *Dictionary of Insulting Quotations*, though a trawl through the latter suggests that the allegedly smarmy Mr Blair is only carrying on a long and noble British tradition. Nietzsche, in 1889, said: "The English are the people of consummate cant," while in 1953 the East German Communist Party included "paralytic sycophants" and "carrot-eating servile imitators" among the approved terms of abuse for the British. For an accusation of pure smarmy, however, surely no one can outdo Disraeli's condemnation of Sir Robert Peel: "The Right Honourable Gentleman's smile is like the silver fittings on a coffin." There's one for the Blair-bashers.

William Hartston

ON THIS DAY 1939



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Dominion Resources to decide today on takeover bid for East Midlands

Chris Godmark
Business Correspondent

The board of Dominion Resources, the US utility group considering launching a takeover bid for East Midlands Electricity, is expected to decide today whether to press ahead with a formal offer.

Senior Dominion executives were returning to the US last

night after evaluating a potential bid with their UK advisers, SBC Warburg. An announcement is likely by Monday.

A bout of profit-taking and mounting fears that the bid would be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission drove East Midlands' share price down 15p to 592.5p.

The US power supplier revealed on Wednesday that it was

considering making an offer at not much above 608p.

Sources close to Dominion would only say that the board meeting, to be held at the group's Virginia headquarters, would take place "in the next few working days".

However, City analysts said the US company would have to pay around 670p a share for an East Midlands bid to be suc-

cessful, valuing the Nottingham-based group at £1.3bn.

Electricity analysts at investment bankers Kleinwort Benson advised investors to hang on to their shares and suggested the other three remaining RECs which did not face takeover bids, London, Yorkshire and Southern, could be undervalued by as much as a third.

This assessment was at odds

with the increasingly pessimistic views of some fund managers who doubted whether the Government would allow two more RECs to fall into US hands so close to a general election.

If Northern Electric was taken over by CE Electric and East Midlands falls to Dominion it would mean five of the 12 regional power suppliers were

under foreign control.

A manager from one leading pension fund commented: "My major concern is on the regulatory front. You just don't know what the DTI is going to do with these bids after it blocked the takeover of South West Water."

However, the suggestion that Dominion would pay only 608p for East Midlands gave a massive boost to CE Electric's bid campaign for Northern, helping the US bidders to double their stake in the company.

By last night CE Electric had bought a further 13.5 million Northern shares, raising its stake from 13.4 per cent to 26.76 per cent. Northern shares drifted lower all day, closing 7p down at 623.5p, well below CE's 630p offer price. It brings CE's stake close to the 30 per

cent limit under takeover rules pending the bid's approval by the DTI.

David Sokol, the chairman of Nebraska-based CalEnergy, CE's main shareholder, said: "If you look at Dominion's proposed offer it would appear that our bid is too high. People generally regard East Midlands as a better REC than Northern."

Ailing Kwik Save to close 107 stores

Nigel Cope

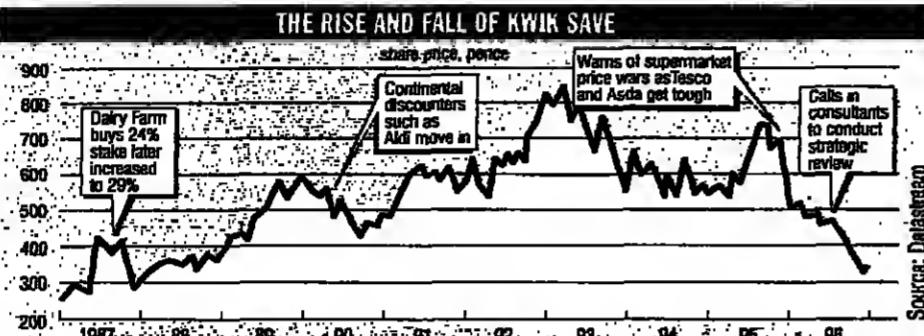
Kwik Save became the latest casualty in the cut-throat supermarket battle yesterday when it announced plans to close 107 stores, threatening 1,900 jobs. The closures are part of a wholesale shake-up of the beleaguered group which is caught between the supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury and the cheaper continental discounters such as Aldi.

The restructuring accompanied a plunge in pre-tax profits from £125m to £2.8m, hit by an £87.5m provision to cover the cost of the closures. The shops will close between January and September though the company hopes either to redeploy staff or to achieve the cuts through natural wastage.

Chief executive Graeme Bowler insisted that in spite of its problems Kwik Save still had a place on Britain's high streets. "This is a company that is generating £3.5bn of sales, has nine million customer transactions every week and is making £90m profit."

His finance director Derek Pretty stressed the company's strong cash flow and balance sheet: "This is not a company which is on its knees."

The eight-month review was undertaken by Andersen Consulting, which was paid £4m in fees for the project. The result is that Kwik Save intends to retain its marketing proposition



as a discount supermarket while moving slightly up-market.

Store layouts and lighting will be improved. Trading hours will become more flexible to suit each location though it has ruled out a "7-11" convenience store approach. A new Kwik Save own label will be introduced, with the first ranges available from next spring.

More emphasis will be placed on fresh foods, convenience products and over-the-counter medicines.

The stores will be made less cluttered with lower shelving. Fresh fruit and vegetable concessions will be moved inside the main store so customers only have to queue at one check-out.

Investment in staff training will be increased. There will be more investment in new technology with better point-of-sale systems and re-ordering.

Frank Davidson of James Capel called it "deeply unim-

pressive". He added: "Old, marginal stores lose volume. But what can they do? Perhaps they will eventually be taken over by Aldi. It would be a kindness."

Mr Bowler said the board had considered selling the business but denied that it had received any approaches from Aldi. No other approaches were received.

He said that Dairy Farm, which owns a 29 per cent stake in the business, was "supportive" of Kwik Save and of its management.

Following the closure programme Kwik Save will have 872 stores. It currently has 23,000 staff.

In the 53 weeks to August Kwik Save's pre-experimental profits fell 28 per cent to £90m. The final dividend was unchanged at 20p. Like for like sales were flat over the year.

Comment, page 21



Battling: Graeme Bowler insisted Kwik Save still had a place on Britain's high streets

BA may have to give up a third of Heathrow slots

Chris Godmark
Business Correspondent

The European Commission is understood to be demanding that British Airways give up as many as a third of its lucrative slots on US routes from Heathrow airport as a condition for approving its proposed alliance with American Airlines.

It also emerged that UK regulatory approval for the merger could be delayed until the middle of December.

Commission officials are examining the monopoly implications of the tie-up, which would give the two carriers control of 60 per cent of flights between the UK and the US, and are unlikely to make recommendations before April.

One reason would be that significant progress in the revived open skies negotiations between the UK and the US is unlikely until President Clinton forms a new cabinet. Frederico Peña, the US Transport Secretary, is not expected to keep a seat in the new Clinton administration. The US Government will only agree to the BA-American alliance if the UK signs an open skies agreement.

The latest proposals by the EC, which were presented to the two carriers last week, are believed to apply to UK-US routes where they would enjoy close to a monopoly. In services between Heathrow and Boston, Miami and Seattle, the alliance would give BA and American 100 per cent of the market.

Mr Lang was thought to be about to reveal his decision, though sources yesterday suggested the announcement could be delayed until mid-December.

He added: "The company believes that retail price maintenance on over-the-counter medicines should remain in force because consumer interests are best served by retaining the service to local communities currently provided by pharmacists. Only a small proportion of

Boots shrugs off price-fixing move

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Boots moved yesterday to defuse worries that the OFT's recent challenge to retail price maintenance in non-prescription drugs might lead to a damaging price war.

Sir Michael Angus, chairman, said the decision to refer Britain's last legal price-fixing arrangement to the Restrictive Practices Court was disappointing but he said Boots the Chemists was well placed whatever its conclusion.

He added: "The company believes that retail price maintenance on over-the-counter medicines should remain in force because consumer interests are best served by retaining the service to local communities currently provided by pharmacists. Only a small proportion of

Boots the Chemists' sales would be affected and past experience suggests that the business would emerge with increased market share."

John Bridgeman, the OFT's director general, said three weeks

ago that a 26-year-old agreement which allows manufacturers to set prices on over-the-counter treatments such as painkillers and vitamins had cost consumers £180m a year on average through artificially high prices.

The move, which some analysts believe could lead to price reductions of up to 15 per cent and cut Boots' overall profits by as much as 6 per cent, was a victory for Asda, the supermarket chain, which had led a campaign to scrap the arrangement.

Sir Michael Angus was speaking as Boots reported a 9 per cent rise in profits before exceptional items in the six months to September. He described the half year as extremely busy for the company. During the six months, Boots sold its Childrens World subsidiary to Storehouse for £62.5m, acquired the 50 per cent of DIY chain Do It

All it did not already own from WH Smith, executed a £300m share buyback and acquired Luisia, a French skincare group, for £115m.

There were profits improvements across the board, although AG Stanley, the Pads and Homestyle DIY group, remained £6.9m in the red (£7.6m loss in 1995).

Boots the Chemists, the core pharmacy chain, saw profits rise from £164.3m to £184m. Halfords increased profits from £9.2m to £11.9m and Boots Opticians' contribution rose from £4.1m to

£4.5m.

Do It All reduced its loss sharply thanks to an 8 per cent rise in sales from ongoing stores, but because Boots assumed full responsibility for the company in June its share of the loss only fell from £4.8m to £3.7m.

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Sir James Blyth, Boots chief executive

German jobless total still rising

Irene Karacs
Bonn

Germany's short-lived economic recovery appears to be faltering. A flurry of unexpectedly depressing data was compounded yesterday by the latest jobless figures, which showed that seasonally adjusted unemployment in October had crashed through the 4 million barrier for the first time since the war.

The jobless rate across the nation now stands at 10.6 per cent - a 0.2 per cent rise on the previous month. As in the bleak winter months last year, unemployment is rising steadily in both east and west Germany.

The figures are particularly disappointing because they correspond to a period of relatively strong economic activity. Germany emerged from its mini-recession in the second quarter, and until recently most economists had forecast a sustained recovery well into 1997.

Last week, the six leading economics institutes said they agreed with the government's prediction of a growth rate of around 1 percent this year, and

2.5 per cent in 1997. However, the latest industrial output figures showed a dip instead of the forecast rise, and the Federation of German Chambers of Commerce revised its growth forecast to between 1.5 and 2 per cent.

Aiming the government target, especially on the budget deficit, is crucial in the battle to meet the Maastricht convergence criteria for European monetary union. Even at the officially forecast growth rate, Germany was on course to miss the budget deficit requirements. The shortfall stems largely from the growing burden of unemployment benefits, which, on current trends, will only become heavier.

On Friday, the government is expected to reveal a tax shift-fall of between DM2bn and DM3bn. The Finance Minister, Theo Waigel, threatens to fill the gap by cutting welfare spending. The ruling coalition of Christian Democrats and Free Democrats is already bitterly divided over the issue, with the Free Democrats effectively vetoing any rise in taxes. The alternative is to cut government department spending.

Clarke calls on Labour to clarify windfall tax

Michael Harrison

The Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, yesterday sought to exploit Labour disarray over the windfall tax by calling on the party's leadership to spell out clearly which industries and companies would be affected.

Mr Clarke also urged the Commons Trade and Industry Select Committee to call the

shadow chancellor, Gordon Brown, to answer questions about how the tax would be structured and levied.

His challenge follows reports that Mr Brown and the Labour leader, Tony Blair are split over how widely the tax should be applied.

A spokeswoman for Mr Blair then said that the party had not changed its position, suggesting that it could also take into account market power, how the

companies had been initially priced and whether they had been lightly regulated.

Labour has also approached the re-elected Clinton administration and told that the tax should not unfairly discriminate against the US utilities that have bought up British regional electricity companies in the last 18 months.

Tony Blair or Gordon Brown should put out a clear statement

saying which industries and which companies will pay the tax. They invented the tax and they should now describe it honestly and clearly.

Estimates of how much the tax might raise vary from £5bn to £10bn. Much will hinge on how widely it is applied and whether the two biggest utilities - BT and British Gas - escape the net or are left with only modest windfall tax bills.

Clarke called on Labour to clarify windfall tax

Statistics as of 7 November

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100		Bow Jones*		NIKKEI					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996 High	1996 Low	Yield (%)			
FTSE 100	3935.70	+14.60	+0.4	4073.10	3632.30	4.00			
FTSE 250	4413.80	+8.70	+0.2	4568.60	4015.30	3.54			
FTSE 350	1964.90	+6.50	+0.3	2022.10	1816.60	3.90			
FT Small Cap	2162.61	+1.71	+0.1	2244.36	1954.06	3.15			
FT All Share	1940.28	+4.08	+0.3	1994.54	1791.95	3.84			
New York*	6177.71	+98.53	+1.6	6094.23	5922.94	2.15			
Tokyo	20991.52	+399.19	+1.9	22665.80	19734.70	0.77			
Hong Kong	12775.47	+272.77	+2.2	12775.47	10204.87	3.31			
Frankfurt	2729.19	+37.90	+1.4	2734.82	2253.36	1.73			



COMMENT

As recently as 1993 Kwik Save was flying high and Dairy Farm (part of Jardine's), which had built up a 29 per cent stake since 1987, had seen its investment double'

Yet another disaster for the Keswick brothers

This has not been a happy few years for the brothers Keswick and their sprawling Jardine Matheson international trading empire. First came their disastrous investment in Trafalgar House, which gobbled up £300m of Jardine's money before the Keswicks finally saw the light and bailed out. Then came the Jardine Fleming debacle. If it is possible to blame Robert Fleming for the neglect and culture of non compliance which allowed this to happen, it must fall doubly so on Jardine Matheson. Robert Fleming, the other partner in this Hong Kong based securities operation, at least had the excuse of being 10,000 miles away on the other side of the world. Jardine's, on the other hand, is not only based in the same building as Jardine Fleming, it occupies the floor immediately above.

And now we have Kwik Save, another of Jardine's ill researched and then neglected investment strategies. It was not always so. As recently as 1993 the supermarket group was flying high and Dairy Farm (part of Jardine's), which had built up a 29 per cent stake since 1987, had seen its investment double. Return on investment was around 50 per cent. Crucially, Kwik Save had virtually no competition.

But in the early 1990s Continental discounters like Aldi and Netto came in, cutting prices to levels Kwik Save could never match. At the same time, Tesco, Sainsbury, et al., were introducing value lines of their own. If you wanted to save money you could

do so in a swanky supermarket, not a tired, neglected branch of Kwik Save. For reasons we can only guess at, Kwik Save management chose to do nothing. Instead of improving their existing stores, they spent their time opening more and more outlets. Too many of its stores are now under-invested and in the wrong location. The shares have halved in the last year and the enviable return on capital figures have been squandered.

For Dairy Farm, the problems are acute. Simon Keswick may have been putting a brave face on it yesterday, but the UK is not his only headache. Dairy Farm's supermarket businesses in Australia and Spain are also struggling. Yesterday's review is a step in the right direction. Brightening up the shops and removing their terrible clutter will make them seem less like a Polish discounter. Introducing an own label will help margins. For the time being, however, the Keswicks are going to have to resign themselves to the fact that their hoped for exit of a bid from the Continental discounters is not going to materialise.

Meanwhile what to do about Jardine's more generally? Mind your own business, might be the Keswicks' answer, for this is a company registered in Bermuda, controlled by the Keswicks and without any significant following in the London based investment community. The fact that it is also a company seemingly devoid of all corporate purpose or focus is really neither here nor there, apart, that is, to those unfortunate enough

to be outside shareholders in a Jardine controlled enterprise such as Kwik Save.

A worrying policy shift from Japan?

Interpreting the Delphic remarks of overseas finance officials is always a hazardous business, particularly when the gentleman in question happens to be Japanese. All the same it does appear from comments made yesterday by Etsuko Sakakibara, head of Japan's International Finance Bureau, that a potentially very dramatic shift has occurred in Japan's exchange rate policy. Mr Sakakibara said that Japan's economic recovery was now sufficient to bring an end to the trend of yen depreciation.

This is, of course, only a statement of opinion but the fact that it comes from the man known as "Mr Yen", the official credited with arresting the yen's devastating appreciation against the dollar in the mid-1990s, lends it a certain weight. If indeed policy has shifted, if indeed support for the dollar is going to be abandoned, and if Japanese interest rates are going to be heading higher again, does this fundamentally alter the investment landscape? The answer has to be an emphatic yes, notwithstanding the relatively sanguine reaction of markets yesterday.

For the effect will be to remove the prop that Japanese money has been providing to

the US bond market. That in turn will mean that more American money is going to have to flow into funding the US deficit. That's going to require higher US interest rates which means less money for equities. Everyone knows that Wall Street is inflated and over-valued but nobody seems yet prepared to call the party to a halt. The Dow's euphoric reaction to President Clinton's half victory may yet prove to have been the last all too frenzied dance. And if that is the case the hangover is going to be a mighty one. But then again Mr Sakakibara may not have meant it from the word go.

Waiting for sheriff Lang to make a move

The Virginians rode into town yesterday and did the boys from Nebraska a big favour. Dominion Resources' miserly valuation of East Midlands Electricity makes CalEnergy's offer for Northern Electric look positively generous. Until sheriff Lang puts on his six guns, however, we will not know whether it has done either of them any good.

When it comes to sharp shooting, the President of the Board of Trade might as well be Jimmy Stewart in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. But, as he has shown before in blocking electricity bids, he is lethal with a sawn-off shotgun, for he seems able to make almost anything pass for competition policy

these days. On the face of it, there are few policy issues here Mr Lang could use as an excuse for reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. He has already allowed a number of other American bids for regional distribution companies, so be might be hard pressed to deny these two. CalEnergy's junk bond rating does the company no favours but since its core gearing is typical of the US power sector, this should not stop it from being allowed to bid.

The real question, as ever, is a political one. Ian Byatt, the water regulator, persuaded Mr Lang to block both bids for South West Water on the grounds that it would reduce the number of comparators in the sector from 28 to 27. Since the number of stock market comparators in the electricity distribution sector would fall from a dozen at privatisation to just three if the two US bids are allowed, Mr Lang would have no difficulty in using this as a pretext for sending both the Nebraskans and the Virginians packing.

However, such a move would send all the wrong signals to the re-elected Clinton administration. It would also give the Americans ample scope for exacting their revenge on BT, which needs US regulatory approval for its £12bn tilt at MCL. But it is nearing election time here as well so there is always room for the rogue card. Watching the Americans ride off with nearly half the electricity industry might be too much even for Mr Lang.

Kleinwort slashes underwriting charges by 30%

Peter Rodgers and Magnus Grimond

City moves to cut the cost of raising capital gathered pace yesterday when Kleinwort Benson raised £120m for Bodycode International in a rights issue where the underwriting commissions were slashed by almost 30 per cent, saving more than £700,000.

The announcement followed hard on the heels of two rights issues managed by Schroders which achieved commission savings of 8 and 11 per cent.

All three moves are part of a campaign to introduce competition into charges to persuade the Office of Fair Trading not to refer the City to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Until recently, charges have been fixed, leading to accusations of a cartel.

Institutions welcomed the Kleinwort announcement, which involved the auction of 53 per cent of the sub-underwriting compared with 36 per cent

in Schroders' most recent issue, for More Group, and 28 per cent for the first auction, for Stakis last week.

But there was criticism of BZW for not cutting commissions in a £35m capital raising for Mayflower Corporation, the vehicle body manufacturers, also announced yesterday. BZW organised a placing and open offer which also involves underwriting commissions.

The shares went to an immediate premium, which one institution claimed was an indication that the underwriting risks were low enough to justify a cut in commission. The shares closed 8p up 145p.

Bodycode also rose 31.5p to a new high of 742.5p, but as a result of the auction, sub-underwriters were paid just over 1 per cent on a fixed commission scale. Kleinwort reduced its own commission pro rata, bringing the total saving to £701,000 or 29.3 per cent of the equivalent fixed commission cost.

Booming retail sales dampen Budget hopes

Michael Harrison

Fresh doubts were cast over the prospects for a tax-cutting Budget yesterday as retailers reported high street sales at their most buoyant level for eight years.

The Confederation of British Industry's latest distributive trades survey shows that the number of retailers reporting higher sales is the biggest since August 1988. Orders placed with suppliers are also rising at their fastest rate since January 1988 while the number of retailers stocking up in anticipation of increased demand is higher than at any time in the past 12 months.

After a slight dip in September, the boom in sales has returned, said the CBI. For the first time since January 1990 all areas of retailing are experiencing some sales growth.

But it is most pronounced in grocery, confectionery, the off-licence trade and clothing and footwear. Sale of furniture, carpets, hardware, china and DIY goods also benefited from the strong performance of the housing market.

Alastair Eperon, chairman of the CBI's distributive trades survey panel, said: "October's pick-up in annual retail trade is good news for retailers. They will also be reassured that the three-monthly moving average

of underlying growth strengthened in October, indicating that consumer confidence is holding up."

However, the CBI is cautioning that the strength of consumer demand reinforces the need for the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, to opt for a cautious and prudent Budget. Adair Turner, the CBI's director general, voiced concern yesterday that a tax giveaway Budget might have to be paid for with higher interest rates which would in turn put upward pressure on the pound and hit exporters.

The CBI survey covers 15,000 retail outlets employing 40 per cent of all high street staff.

GOLDSMITHS:

Aberdeen - Bath
Brighton - Canterbury
Chelmsford - Cheltenham
Chester - Exeter
Gateshead - Guildford
Harrogate - Leicester
Llandudno
London Bishopsgate
Nottingham - Torquay
Wakefield

Weston-super-Mare
Wigan - Wilmotlow
NORTHERN GOLDSMITHS:
Newcastle-upon-Tyne

WALKER & HALL:
Altrincham - Cardiff
Dudley - Ilford
Leicester - Lincoln
Middlesbrough
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Nottingham - Oxford
Sheffield - Stirling
Thurrock - Woking

ALFRED CHILLCOTT & CO:
Bristol

GREENWOOD JEWELLERS:
Leeds

GEO ATTENBOROUGH:
London

BRACHER & SYDENHAM:
Reading

GEO FARRER LIMITED:
Tunbridge Wells

FATTORINI & SONS:
Bradford - Sheffield

ROBINSON:
Shrewsbury

HUNSEY & CO:
Cambridge

STRADLINGS:
Cirencester

JA HASKELL:
Ipswich

WALKER & HALL:

London

WALKER & HALL:</

business

Pubmaster sale earns £170m for Brent Walker

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Brent Walker yesterday disposed of Pubmaster, its chain of 1,650 mainly tenanted pubs, in a deal that leaves the William Hill bookmaking operation as its only remaining trading division. The £171m sale, which was backed by NatWest Ventures, gives up to 10 per cent of the chain to its management, led by former chairman John Brackenbury, and paves the way for a flotation of the pubs in two or three years.

The deal also holds out the possibility that Brent Walker shareholders, who have watched their company collapse under a mountain of debt, may end up with some value for their stakes. It emerged yesterday that the company had put off plans to dispose of William Hill, preferring to let the bookmaker trade out of its recent difficulties before negotiating a debt-for-equity swap with its bankers that would leave shareholders with a heavily diluted stake in a company focused exclusively on the betting shops.

John Leach, chief executive, said the £171m proceeds of the sale represented the best reasonably achievable terms in current and foreseeable market conditions. Mr Brackenbury and colleagues are expected to take their full allotment of 10 per cent of Pubmaster's shares in exchange for an investment described only as a "seven-figure sum". The NatWest-led syndicate of backers also includes Prudential Ventures, HSBC and Bank of Scotland.

Brent Walker built up the Pubmaster chain after acquiring a number of pubs in 1988 from Grand Metropolitan, from whom it was later to buy the William Hill chain. A year later it added the Tollenache & Cobbold and Cameron brew-



John Brackenbury: Would make a fortune on stock market

eries, together with their estates of tied pubs, and it has since expanded through acquisitions from Allied Breweries and Whitbread to become one of the country's largest pub landlords. Brent Walker sold the chain after deciding Pubmaster risked an acceleration of its loss in market position because of the holding company's inability to match the rising levels of capital expenditure across the industry. As-on-trade beer volumes have declined over the past five years, increasing amounts of money have been poured into doing up pubs to try and grab a larger share of the slowly declining market. Pubmaster has been unable to compete.

A spokesman for NatWest Ventures said the deal repre-

sented good value at only 11 times earnings per share, compared to price/earnings ratios of up to 30 for the more fashionable managed pub estates such as Regent Inns and JD Wetherspoon. He said Pubmaster's financial backers intended to bring it back to the stock market within three years in a deal which looks certain to make sizeable fortunes for Mr Brackenbury and his fellow directors.

Brent Walker's remaining trading operation, William Hill, remains affected by the National Lottery, although Mr Leach said it was starting to benefit from a cut in betting duty, the introduction of slot machines into betting shops, and betting on the Irish lottery.

Comment, page 21

Directors' pay still three times level of inflation

Roger Trapp

Senior company directors are still awarding themselves pay rises three times the level of inflation, according to a survey from Monks Partnership published today.

However, there are signs that boardroom largess is beginning to be tempered. The rise in total earnings of chief executives and full-time chairmen actually fell from 8.8 per cent to 7.7 per cent in the past year, while their basic salary increases

bare remained broadly static at 5.3 per cent, the survey found.

The latest edition of the remuneration advisers' annual study of boardroom pay in 750 UK parent companies shows that other directors enjoyed total earnings increases of 5.2 per cent, but that base salary rises were higher, at 6.8 per cent.

There are no 1995 figures for these executives because the Stock Exchange only changed its listing rules to require greater disclosure of remuner-

ation for all main board directors in October of that year.

Considerable variations in pay exist between different sectors of the economy. The biggest pay increases for chief executives came in leisure and publishing, where salaries jumped by 9 per cent.

The largest increases in total earnings were the 11.8 per cent awarded to chief executives in food, drink and tobacco and the 8.1 per cent achieved by other directors in engineering and electronics. The lowest rises in

total earnings were the 4 per cent given to chief executives in consumer goods companies and zero for other directors in building materials and construction.

The level of international involvement undertaken by an executive and the functional responsibilities incurred can also affect salary levels in larger companies. "International involvement may command a premium of up to 25 per cent of base salary," says the study.

The report, *UK Board Earnings*, also finds that companies

are increasingly taking up an alternative to the traditional share option schemes in an effort to provide senior executives with incentives. More than 60 per cent of listed industrial and commercial companies with a turnover of more than £5bn reported long-term incentive plans (LTIPs) in which main board directors might be invited to participate.

The maximum award varies greatly, but the overall median is 60 per cent of base salary, rising to 75 per cent for companies

with a turnover of more than £5bn.

Three-quarters of the LTIPs are awarded in shares, while earnings per share, share price and total shareholder return are the most popular measures of performance.

Alison Smith, the report's editor, said Monks was able to take advantage of the vast amounts of information about main board directors' pay in annual reports and compare the differentials of a range of directors rather than just chief executives.

Investment column, this page

• **Hambro Insurance Services** raised profits by half to £4.53m before tax in the six months to September on turnover up 22 per cent to £50m. Christopher Sproborg, the chairman, said there had been substantial management and organisational improvements.

• **The stores group Burton** confirmed that it expected to have all its divisions, which range from Top Man to Debenhams, involved in mail-order trading over the next two to three years. The move follows the acquisition earlier this year of Innovations and Racing Green, two catalogue retailers. Burton announced a 54 per cent rise in profits to £1.52m for last year as it curbed discounting in its chains and higher charge card transactions boosted sales by 7 per cent.

• **UniChem**, vying with Geche of Germany in a £650m bid battle for Lloyds Chemists, discounted a report that it would move 10 per cent of Lloyds' 924 outlets to supermarkets if it won. "If you ask me, are we going to have another 100 [pharmacy] licences in supermarkets, then that is not my intention. Most of them are not close enough to warrant it anyway," said Jeffrey Harris, chief executive. However, he admitted that part of the benefit of a merger would come from relocating some pharmacies. UniChem's offer document is expected to be published early next week.

• **The number of Americans applying for state unemployment benefits unexpectedly fell last week.** First-time jobless claims dropped by 11,000 to a seasonally adjusted 331,000.

• **Swiss Bank**, Switzerland's third-largest bank, saw nine-month net profits rise 27 per cent from a year earlier, though no figures were given. It said full-year net profit growth would be "a few percentage points" below its original forecast of 33 per cent before extraordinary charges of SF1.4bn (\$1.1bn) as earnings growth slowed in the third quarter.

• **Intel**, the world's largest semiconductor maker, expects revenues and gross profit margins to be sharply higher in the fourth quarter due to strong demand for personal computer chips. The maker of the popular Pentium and Pentium Pro microprocessors said fourth-quarter sales were expected to be "significantly higher" than the \$5.14bn generated in the third quarter. Gross margins, a key indicator of profitability, should exceed the third quarter's surprisingly strong rate of 57 per cent.

• **Sony's group profits tripled in the six months ended September** as a weaker Japanese yen boosted overseas sales of camcorders, video recorders, televisions and its game player, PlayStation. Analysts said earnings growth was more modest if currency swings were ignored. Net profits for the Sony group, which includes domestic and overseas subsidiaries such as movie maker Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc, tripled to 51.74tn yen (\$461.9m). Sales rose 23 per cent to 2.53tn yen.

• **The feelgood factor is returning**, according to the Britannia Building Society's quarterly survey, but the 18-34 age group is much more confident than older people. Some 44 per cent of young people feel better off, compared to just 19 per cent a year ago, and against a third of middle-aged and just 18 per cent of the over 55s.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
All Holding (F)	29.3m (27.1m)	3.46m (3.03m)	12.0p (10.8p)	6.0p (5.75p)
J White (F)	784.9m (735.8m)	42.84m (32.93m)	18.93p (12.07p)	5.5p (5.75p)
Boots (F)	2.12m (1.94m)	256m (227.9m)	18.1p (15.3p)	6.2p (5.75p)
Burton Group (F)	20m (1.95m)	151.8m (98.6m)	7.8p (5.2p)	1.65p
Channel Island Cycles (F)	5.62m (4.51m)	65.000m (64.000m)	4.01p (3.84p)	1.5p (1.25p)
Cutter Holdings (F)	4.82m (2.34m)	65.000m (132.000m)	0.18p (0.47p)	n/a
Hambro Insurance (F)	50.17m (41.15m)	4.53m (3.03m)	3.75p (2.75p)	1.85p (1.65p)
Kirk Sane (F)	3.51m (3.23m)	2.8m (2.5m)	-14.61p (51.55p)	20p (20p)
Porter Chalmers (F)	35.62m (31.5m)	2.9m (2.1m)	1.55p (1.75p)	0.25p
J Smart (F)	17.21m (17.04m)	2.94m (3.44m)	27.48p (23.14p)	6.5p
Senate (F)	2.37m (2.18m)	115.297 (77.828)	3.86p (2.69p)	1.25p (1.25p)
Staveley Inds (F)	198.1m (171.8m)	10.2m (8.1m)	6.7p (5.3p)	2.5p
SMP Group (F)	9.81m (8.1m)	-602.000 (-761.000)	-10 (-1.33p)	n/a
Warren Howard (F)	13.85m (13m)	3.95m (3.57m)	10.84p (10p)	3.5p (3.15p)
Yates Bros Wharf (F)	34.36m (29.23m)	4.25m (3.18m)	8.1p (5.5p)	1.44p (1.25p)
(F) - Full (F) - Interim (W) - Nine months				

Daimler motors ahead with turnover of £31bn

Daimler-Benz, Germany's biggest industrial group, yesterday provided further proof it was on the road to recovery from record losses in 1995 by indicating that sales grew strongly in the first nine months of 1996 and predicting higher earnings in the second half of the year.

Daimler said turnover in the first nine months expanded to DM75.9bn (£30.6bn), up 11 per cent on an adjusted basis, an increase that came largely on the back of its car and truck unit, Mercedes-Benz.

Jürgen Schrempp, chairman, hailed the sales increase as evidence that his plans for streamlining the company and targeting shareholder value were paying off. "This development confirms the course of focusing on a growth strategy and stronger earnings," he said.

Analysts agreed, saying the tough measures Daimler had undertaken should see profits in the second half easily above the DM827m achieved at the operating level in the first six months.

These figures are quite positive," said Lothar Lubinski, analyst at Enskilda Corporate. "They show Daimler is finally on the right track." Shares in Daimler, which have climbed steadily since the summer, edged up to DM93.20.

Sales at Mercedes-Benz, which for years has been Daimler's cash cow, climbed 8 per cent to almost DM57bn in the first nine months of the year. Demand for Mercedes models such as the E-class and the new SLK roadster sports car were

behind stronger car business, but Daimler warned that the company's truck division still faced an uphill battle in a tough market.

The company's aircraft unit, Daimler-Benz Aerospace, reported lower sales of DM828m than a year ago, but Daimler said that on an adjusted basis – accounting for restructuring at Dasa – turnover climbed 18 per cent.

Dasa has been Daimler's Achilles' heel, producing most of last year's red ink and fight-

ing a tough battle through its involvement in the Airbus consortium against market leader, Seattle-based Boeing Corp.

Daimler's information and financial services unit, Debsi, saw sales increase to DM9.76bn from DM5.7bn.

The figures mark the latest chapter in Daimler's recovery after reporting a massive DM5.7bn loss in 1995 – the largest loss ever reported by a German company.

But slashing unprofitable businesses and other stream-

lining measures helped Daimler return to profit in the first half of this year.

Although the company has already closed several unprofitable units, it is considering a massive restructuring aimed at further increasing profitability and hopes to finalise such plans at a supervisory board meeting on 23 January.

Although investors have welcomed the restructuring plans, the company overhaul has reportedly led to strife within Daimler.

Spencer, confirm a real improvement on the high street and Boots is benefiting from this. The market remains suspicious, however, and yesterday Boots' shares closed 10p lower at 61.1p.

On the basis of profits this year of about £440m and maybe £600m next time, the shares trade on a prospective price/earnings ratio 12 months out of no more than 15. That represents a sizeable discount to many of its retailing

Five years on, Burton looks smarter

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

this year, the shares, up 0.5p at 145.5p, stand on a forward multiple of 15. With sales currently nearly 8 per cent ahead and a consumer boom in prospect, they still look reasonable value.

conclusion that moves to set up pilot operations in the Far East and Holland represent a tacit acknowledgement that real growth will have to come from pastures new. For investors, that transforms the risk/reward profile of what has hitherto been a safe, predictable and cash-generative stock.

Figures for the six months to September were impressive, even given the buoyant consumer background. Boots

The Chemists powers on with healthy

like-for-like growth and an improvement in the unspecified gross margin. Elsewhere, the various components of the disastrous 1990 Ward White continued their convalescence.

Underlying profits at Halfords were 19 per cent higher with own brands proving increasingly popular. Do It All, which Boots now owns completely, having bought out former partner WH Smith, is on the mend. It may break even profit next year. Even Fads owner AG Stanley reduced its loss, although at 26.9m in the half, from sales of just over £50m. It is still pretty unacceptable.

Recent comments from a range of consumer-sensitive companies, including Whitbread and Marks &

Spencer, confirm a real improvement on the high street and Boots is benefiting from this. The market remains suspicious, however, and yesterday Boots' shares closed 10p lower at 61.1p.

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businesses.

The euphoria looks justified, given that SCSM is much more within Mayflower's focus than Pullman. The deal should propel its existing US panels operation from the number 13 position in the market to number four and bring in a string of blue chip customers including General Motors and Mercedes, as well as increasing the current business with Ford. Already the dominant player in the UK market for outsourcing panel work, the enhanced global reach proved by SCSM, added to its existing design and engineering expertise, should enhance its credibility with the big motor manufacturers.

Mayflower is paying \$137m in cash and will take on borrowings of \$27.8m as a result of the deal. That will send gearing to a heady 200 per cent or so, after the goodwill write-off, but interest cover should remain above seven times, at worst. The company says the acquisition will be earnings-enhancing from day one, despite the lack of substantial rationalisation benefits from integrating the two businesses. The long-term prospects for this business look good, with less than 10 per cent of manufacturers' requirements outsourced in the UK at present, a figure that only rises to 30 per cent or so across the Atlantic. In the short run though, SCSM increases the group's exposure to the volatile volume end of the market, accounting for 30 per cent of sales in future. Hoare Govett's forecast of profits of £22m next year, when the deal kicks in, would still put the shares on a forward p/e of 17. High enough.

IN BRIEF

• **Hambro Insurance Services** raised profits by half to £4.53m before tax in the six months to September on turnover up 22 per cent to £50m. Christopher Sproborg, the chairman, said there had been substantial management and organisational improvements.

• **The stores group Burton** confirmed that it expected to have all its divisions, which range from Top Man to Debenhams, involved in mail-order trading over the next two to three years. The move follows the acquisition earlier this year of Innovations and Racing Green, two catalogue retailers. Burton announced a 54 per cent rise in profits to £1.52m for last year as it curbed discounts in its chains and higher charge card transactions boosted sales by 7 per cent.

sport

The cynical managers, now long in the tooth, might tell Hoddle that he is wasting his time and will, inevitably, be let down

The dressing-room at a football club is a very special type of place for those granted entry. It can even become a player's second home. It is a club within a club, with very few secrets.

I was once told of a player who beat his wife. In that particular dressing-room there was also a thief, a university graduate and two very heavy drinkers. Otherwise it was a typical cross-section of players. In company they would generally be very good, very generous and very funny people to be around.

Apparently the player who beat his wife was not a high-flier. He earned fairly ordinary money by the standards at the time. His best chance of international honours

came when England played the rest in the weekly five-a-side.

The manager of the club in question was, I know, very aware of the dressing-room's individual characters but showed little or no inclination to get involved. His preference was to turn two blind eyes. He picked the team, hoped they won, and moreover hoped he kept his job. His involvement and influence over the lives of his players began and ended with their performance and the result they produced.

Unfortunately, some years later the player in question finished up in jail and subsequently, tragically, took his own life.

Football managers generally tread a very precarious tightrope, try-

ing to balance their responsibilities to the club and results with their wider responsibilities to the individuals for whose performances they are also responsible.

Managers vary. Some choose to subjugate deep personal disapproval in stomaching all manner of personal and social inadequacies in their players, in the interests of that ever-elusive victory.

Others demand a much stricter code in terms of what is and what is not acceptable behaviour. This wide judgmental policy is pursued, in some cases, no matter what the cost might be in performances, points or personal popularity.

Paul Gascoigne is a footballer of



HOWARD WILKINSON

on his best days can be right up there with the best. His personality has prevented him producing as many

of these days as he should have. His inclusion in the England squad for tomorrow's match in Georgia may well have been touch and go anyway, even without his off-the-field divisions.

In those circumstances Glenn Hoddle must have known that to omit Gascoigne from the squad would have been the easier, safer and definitely more popular option. He well knew he had more to lose than he had to gain.

Hoddle's position is obviously slightly different to that of a club manager because his players are representing their country. If playing for Rangers equates to a consular post in Andorra, representing England is like being the ambassador to the

United States. However, this is only Hoddle's third game and at the moment this particular loose cannon has, since he took over, remained loaded and primed, but not discharged.

So why did Hoddle get involved? Managers are eternal optimists, all of them endowed with a totally illogical, even arrogant belief that they can change and affect the player with whom all before have failed. They also know they have to win, and that requires playing the best players available. That never changes.

Some like, even need, their players to be the sort of people they like, even admire. They believe and are committed to affecting their players in the widest sense. Hoddle, it would appear, feels this way about his job. He also understands his very wide responsibilities to the game and must therefore place a heavy onus on players to share that responsibility.

Gascoigne must now, once and for all, accept that responsibility and appreciate the risk taken on his behalf by his manager. The cynical managers, now long in the tooth, might tell Hoddle he is wasting his time and will, inevitably, be let down.

If Gascoigne does not appreciate this great risk there can be no second chance. If he does, we could see a person and a career saved. Years ago, a similar managerial intervention might have seen a life saved.

Leicester and Quins games off

Rugby Union

Bristol and Saracens have called off tomorrow's Courage League One games against Leicester and the leaders, Harlequins, respectively after being asked by the Rugby Football Union to release their Irish international players.

Northampton, however, have decided not to seek the postponement of their sell-out game with Bath, even though they will be without four internationals.

Bristol's Paul Burke and David Corkery, plus the Saracens trio Paddy Johns, Paul and Richard Wallace, are required for an Irish training camp leading up to next Tuesday's Test against Western Samoa at Lansdowne Road in which Vaiiga Tuigamala will resume his international union career after a three-year break.

London Irish's home game against Wasps had already been rearranged for 16 November, while Second Division Newcastle won a postponement of Rotherham's trip to Kingston Park due to calls on Nick Popplewell and Ross Neesdale.

There is nothing quite like a barbed comment or two from back home to weld a touring side together. John Eales and his inexperienced band of new age Wallabies play Scotland at Murrayfield tomorrow in the first stage of their quest for a Celtic Triple Crown, and they will almost certainly draw collective strength from the latest outburst of high-profile domestic derision.

The Queensland coach, John Connolly, went on television in Australia on Wednesday to voice his concern over a "videoed squad" who, apparently, were "living in an atmosphere of fear". Besides embarrassing Eales, who captained Queensland and worked closely with Connolly throughout last summer's Super-12 tournament, the comments also put the national coach, Greg Smith, in an even more determined state of mind. The Scots may yet have cause to wish Connolly had kept his opinions to himself.

"It's got hard to work out what is happening," Smith fumed. "These sorts of comments come from people who fail to get the Wallaby coaching job. It's just so irritating. A few people with access to the media are trying to destabilise the camp by spreading lies and untruths. I wish they would support the team instead." Characteristically, Eales was content to play down the issue but said ominously: "This could work for us as much as against us."

Holyfield still in pursuit of grail

Ken Jones, in Las Vegas, assesses the twice world champion's prospects against the formidable Mike Tyson tomorrow night

The morning after Evander Holyfield lost the undisputed world heavyweight championship to Riddick Bowe on 13 November 1992 his associates advised retirement from boxing. "You've got more in the bank than you are ever likely to need and there isn't anything left to prove," Lou Dova said.

So what was it, kept Holyfield in the ring: fame, the warrior instinct, a fear of antinomian or, as Mike Tyson who is defending the World Boxing Association title against him tomorrow believes, the effect of an acquisitive nature?

Barely six months on from an effort that had left him utterly exhausted, Holyfield gained a 12-round decision over Alex Stewart in Atlantic City. No longer connected with the Duvais, who had switched their attention to Lennox Lewis, and struggling to overcome the moderate resistance of an opponent Tyson blew away in one round, he looked awful.

Remarkable as the story became when Holyfield took back the WBA and International Boxing Federation titles from Bowe, the tests he underwent for cardiac problems following a subsequent loss to Michael Moorer in April 1994 brings anxiety to this week's proceedings.

The ancient creed by which Holyfield abides does not allow for equivocation. That he has always been prepared to leave the ring on a shield makes people worry for him. Holyfield asks himself, "How many fights have I been in to the point where my will has been tested?" The answer encourages Holyfield to believe that he can stand up to Tyson, one of the most devastating hitters boxing has ever known.

Holyfield will never be remembered with Muhammad Ali and Joe Louis, who were truly big men as well as great talents, or with Rocky Marciano, who was a crude phenomenon, but as a two-times heavyweight champion he claims a place in history.

"I see greatness in a different way than a lot of people see it," he said this week after completing a lively sparring session. "You're only as great as the guy you fight. Sometimes you win because you're more talented, but there will always be people who step up and meet you

head on. Then it is how you respond to defeat, if it comes, or how you respond to fighting somebody who hits just hard and keeps coming back at you."

Holyfield has the reputation of a conscientious, hard-striving fighter, the kind who relies mostly on courage and endurance, qualities that are nevertheless evident in the men he admires. "All the fighters who have been considered great are people you couldn't look at and always be sure they would win," he said. "Sometimes they won because of what they were willing to go through. It comes down from Louis, Marciano, Ali, who went in with fighters who were winners too. You don't get a big name in boxing, get all the way to a championship, by overcoming oppo-

'When it is time to examine my career, the names on my record will be important'

nents who choose not to fight. When it is time to examine my career, to figure out where I stand in history, the names on my record will be important."

The most recent is that of Bobby Czyz, no more than a passable imitation of a heavyweight who lasted five rounds last May when he faced Holyfield at Madison Square Garden. "I know I didn't look very good that night," Holyfield said, "but I found it very difficult to get interested. It isn't the same when a fight doesn't appear to be very important. You remember those other nights when there was everything to go for and it affects your concentration. There isn't the same buzz, that feel of uncertainty that helps to get you up for a fight."

Holyfield is not the most forthcoming of men and he finds articulation a problem. "Only time is really going to prove the point, but this fight here will take me to a different level," he added. "People have different perceptions of how

they think a boxer should be and whether they think him to have real talent. I think I will be more appreciated when my career is over. Then there will be an understanding that I didn't get hit as often as some may imagine. That I slipped most of the shots."

Fears about Holyfield's health are less relevant to tomorrow's contest than the probability that he is a spent fighter. However, that conclusion does not bother him.

The same was said before the second fight against Bowe, hot. I proved to have more than he could handle. I came back when most of the writers thought I was finished."

Two days before that contest at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, quite late at night, I came across Holyfield in an elevator. He was with the girlfriend he married two months ago and I thought it odd behaviour so close to the contest. The impression you got was that it would be enough to go out against a younger man and prove that he was no quitter. Instead he defeated Bowe, taking advantage of the champion's slackness in preparation.

If Holyfield had lost that fight it is probable that he would have gone into permanent retirement, which is what he should have done anyway. "Maybe," he said, "but I was convinced that I could beat Bowe in the way I'm sure I can surprise everyone by beating Tyson. I've proved a lot in my time, came back after being written off even by people who had believed in me and it is all about having a positive attitude and putting your trust in God. I'm not suggesting that God is on my side but if I felt He was against me in this I would be out of boxing."

By conservative estimate, Holyfield has grossed more than \$100m (£62,000) in ring earnings and his thirst is legendary. His wedding breakfast was held at a roadside diner. Holyfield does not have the first dollar he ever made but he probably remembers what it was spent on.

What Holyfield will not accept, of course, is that he is about to become another of Tyson's hapless victims. "I think Tyson's beatable," he says. Which is why people worry about him.

Evander Holyfield: 'I've proved a lot in my time, coming back after being written off'

Photograph: Bob Donnan/Allsport

Seles enjoys another easy day at the office

Tennis

Monica Seles, the top seed, made short work of her first match at the Bank of the West Classic in Oakland, California, beating Patricia Hy-Boulais of Canada 6-1, 6-2 in just 60 minutes.

Also winning their second-round matches on Wednesday were the second seed Lindsay Davenport, the fifth seed Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of the Netherlands, Kimberly Po and Linda Wild.

Seles, twice the winner here, dominated from the start, slicing forehands to the corners. She will now face Po in the quarter-finals.

Seles came into the match following a semi-final defeat to Jennifer Capriati in Chicago on Saturday. That setback dropped her from joint world No 1 with Steffi Graf to joint No 2 with Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario.

"After this year is over, I just want to do better at the Grand Slams," Seles said. "Not so much the rankings. Being number one is definitely not a priority in my life any more. It's a bonus."

Atherton against family visits on tour

Cricket

see the trip as vital to the build-up to next summer's Ashes series against Australia.

Atherton said: "We have had a chat about it and there were some strong views aired. We have tried to persuade the players we would like, in this instance, families to stay at home. But there is no clause saying players will be disciplined if wives come out. I don't, however, expect to see any."

However, it is part of a general agreement with Lord's that players should be allowed to be visited by family members during a tour. A team meeting was held during England's training trip to southern Portugal this week in an effort to resolve the issue. Atherton and the coach, David Lloyd, said:

"I couldn't tell her about shoulder problems." Hy-Boulais said: "Munica plays a different game than the rest of the pack. She stays right on top of the baseline and makes you alter a lot of shots."

Seles, who heat Martina Navratilova in her wins here in 1990 and 1992, could meet the other Martina in Sunday's final. Switzerland's Martina Hingis meets Wild in the quarter-finals.

Seles has only one seed, fourth-seeded Mary Joe Fernandez, in her half of the draw. Hingis has Schultz-McCarthy and Davenport in her section.

One extra second would undoubtedly have given London Towers victory over Verona in their European Cup group game at Wembley Arena on Wednesday night, but instead their 71-64 overtime defeat leaves 69-59 lead in overtime as London lost their heads in a barrage of hasty three-point attempts and rash fouls.

Towers are in the final qualifying place, fourth, and must win their two final home games against the clubs below them, Vita Tbilisi, of Georgia, and Podgorica, of Yugoslavia. Victory in either of their away games in Turkey or Hungary would be a bonus.

Their coach, Kevin Cadle, said: "We threw up three or four three-pointers even when we were only a couple of baskets down. We still had time to carry on driving to their basket and scoring or drawing fouls."

High noon for Hightown and Trojans

Hockey

BILL COWELL

Hightown and Trojans, who both shipped goals in shock defeats last weekend, meet tomorrow at Formby with both teams likely to be missing key players.

Helen Grant, Lucy Newcombe and Caroline Gilbert, European Under-21 bronze medallists in the summer, will again be missing for Hightown, who lost 8-2 at Doncaster, but defender Debbie Mills, who required hospital treatment after a facial injury last week, is expected to be fit. Trojans, who went down 5-0 to Cheltenham, hope Ali Wakefield and Kath James will return.

Leaders Slough entertain Ipswich, trailing by three points in third place. Sally Eyre returns for Slough and the Olympian Anna Bennett is fit again.

Oulton and Old Loughtonians top of the First and Second Divisions respectively and the only two League sides on maximum points, both play their nearest rivals. Wimbledon visit Oulton and Old Loughtonians travel to Loughborough to play Students.

Olympics set to lose Hobie and Star

Sailing

STUART ALEXANDER

After three shows of hands and four secret ballots, the choice of boats for the 2000 Olympics in Sydney – and those classes to be excluded – was drafted on Friday.

The venerable Star class, in which Britain won gold in 1988, was eclipsed after appearing in 14 Olympics since 1952 and the lobbies for the Hobie 16 catamaran were reeling from being excluded even from the voting.

Through went the new 49er, Mistral board and 470 dinghies for both men and women, the Tornado cat, the Laser, the Finn, the Europe and the Soling, which will also be the match racer.

The events committee of the International Sailing Federation had kept a packed room waiting for over an hour and a half before it tackled the most exciting subject of the week.

Everyone knew that something had to go to make way for the 49er as the only additional medal in 2000 will be for women's match racing. In stepped America's Tom Ehman,

who will be the 49er's skipper. Tony Bullimore, who returned to Les Sables d'Olonne for steering gear repairs, was due to restart last night.

الدبلوماسي

Howard Wilkinson
on Gascoigne and the dilemma of
problem players, page 26

sport

Holyfield's quest

Ken Jones on Mike Tyson's
brave challenger, page 26

Wright and Sheringham at front of phoney war

Football

IAN RIDLEY
reports from Tbilisi

The day before the day before an England match is always a phoney war and is not to be taken too seriously, certainly not in a city, shell-pocked and short of electricity, where they have known a real one. You know the day was going to get off to a surreal start when a bagpiper – not arranged by Paul Gascoigne – was playing over the jet-lagged players in the team's hotel at midday.

Glen Hoddle knows his cap-

tain and his team for tomorrow's World Cup qualifying match against Georgia, but is not saying yet. Thus it becomes a question of looking for clues to the major issues: who will be the striker(s) now that Alan Shearer is injured? Will Tony Adams replace him as captain (and this correspondent says he will)? Will that pipe ever blow its pipe down?

Yesterday Teddy Sheringham was called upon to meet the press and Hoddle talked up Ian Wright. The pair for Saturday perhaps, despite the fact that Les Ferdinand, who played against Poland last month, will

surely start? Or misinformation for the cager, friendly Georgian journalists enjoying such openness when their own coach, Alexander Chivadze, is apparently of the Pandora Maxwell school of press relations?

"There is not a player sharper in the Premiership than Ian Wright at present," Hoddle said. "He has great awareness in his running off the ball, added to pace, and still has that killer instinct to score goals." It surely sounded like a pointer, though his predecessor Terry Venables' policy of not being swayed by flavours of the month

was ultimately vindicated. Wright's slowness has brought him 13 goals this season. In European competition his instincts have brought him 13 goals in 15 matches, but at international level only five in 20. Four were against San Marino, the other as a substitute in a World Cup qualifier in Poland.

In the Premiership, the ball over the top of a defence has reaped handsome rewards and in Europe pace on the counter-attack is invaluable. The massed, positionally astute ranks at international level, where Wright's touch has been

exposed as often uncertain, can negate his strength, however.

Surely Sheringham should start, though. His thoughtful worth was finally confirmed during Euro '96, while against Poland last month, when still not fully match fit despite being a substitute, the situation cried out for his deep-lying ability to link midfield and attack. It is an art that often goes unappreciated in the open English game spawns.

"As long as my team-mates and managers appreciate me, that's all that matters," Sheringham said. "I am not the sort of guy that picks up the ball on the half-way line, goes past five players and boots it into the top corner. There are different aspects to my game." They are? "That's for me to know and everyone to find out." It was that sort of day.

Hinchliffe was also made available for interview and spoke of his admiration for the system.

"The position helped me," he said. "You can get forward more and you always have the numbers behind to help out."

Hoddle's main worry yesterday appeared to concern the pitch in the Boris Paichadze Stadium. It was bumpy and patchy, he said, "though it won't suit Georgia either, because they are a technical side." It was also the day before the day before an away match in a developing country.

England Under-21 team,
Digest, page 27

Chelsea to pay £5m for Zola

RUPERT METCALF
AND ALAN NIXON

The death last month of their vice-chairman, Matthew Harding, has not, it seems, curtailed Chelsea's spending power. The Stamford Bridge club last night agreed a club-record fee of £5m for Parma's Italian international attacking midfielder, Gianfranco Zola.

According to sources at the Serie A club, the 30-year-old Zola will earn about £5,000 per week as part of his four-year contract with Chelsea, who already have two other Italian internationals in Gianluca Vialli and Roberto di Matteo.

Chelsea's managing director, Colin Hutchinson, flew to Italy yesterday to finalise the deal, which has been agreed between the two clubs although Zola has not yet signed. "We anticipate that he will be doing so in the next few hours," a Parkinson spokesman said.

Zola replaces Di Matteo, a £4.9m buy from Lazio, as Chelsea's record purchase. He has fallen out with Parma's new coach, Carlo Ancelotti, who said last night: "If he has been able to get a good deal, that's good for us. We're both happy."

The Liverpool striker Stan Collymore is in line for a £20,000 fine – the maximum penalty of two weeks' wages for breach of contract – after refusing to turn out for the Anfield club's reserve team at Tranmere on Wednesday. That could be doubled if the £8.5m striker carries on his one-man strike tomorrow, when Liverpool's second string are due to meet Sheffield Wednesday.

Collymore's extreme action was explained last night by a friend who said: "Stan played in a closed-door match against Aston Villa and didn't think he needed another game. He was told him to play in the reserves on Wednesday. He thinks he has worked extra hard in training and even done more work with the kids."

"Stan told Roy it wasn't fair

and that Robbie Fowler got straight back in the team when he was fit and it should be the same for him. I don't know if Stan will play in the reserves on Saturday. In the mood he is, it is probably unlikely."

Collymore reported for training at Liverpool yesterday and had talks with his agent, Paul Stretford, last night about his future. Aston Villa are interested in the England striker as a possible replacement for the Italy-bound Sava Milosevic.

The Leeds manager, George Graham, has denied reports of a training ground row with his striker Ian Rush, who has failed to score since joining Leeds on a free transfer from Liverpool in the summer.

Niall Quinn, Sunderland's record signing, has been ruled out for the rest of the season with damaged knee ligaments. The £1.3m signing from Manchester City needs an operation after sustaining the injury against Coventry seven weeks ago.

The former Manchester United and England defender Paul Parker has joined Sheffield United on a month's contract. The 32-year-old has just concluded a two-month spell at Derby County.

Rangers have been linked with the 23-year-old Hamburg striker, Karsten Bäron. Chelsea boardroom battle, People and Business, page 24



The Scotland squad in training yesterday at a much-altered Hampden Park for Sunday's World Cup qualifier against Sweden at Ibrox

Photograph: David Ashdown

Scotland must play an Estonian encore

PHIL SHAW

Scotland's hopes of a smooth passage to the World Cup finals were dealt a double blow yesterday. Fifa, the governing body of the global game, ordered last month's phantom fixture in Estonia to be replayed, as well as ruling Gary McAllister out of Sunday's Group Four meeting with Sweden in Glasgow.

The tournament's organising committee – chaired by Fifa's Swedish vice-president, Lennart Johansson – instructed Scotland to return to the Baltic republic before 16 March next year.

Fifa will pay the Scots' costs.

Meanwhile, the one-match ban on McAllister, which the Scotland captain understood he had served in Estonia, must be carried over to this weekend's match at Ibrox. Colin Hendry, the official vice-captain, is likely to don the armband de-

spite the fact that John Collins assumed the skipper's duties for the game that never was.

The re-match will take place – "if weather conditions permit," the statement added portentously – in Tallinn, the scene of last month's farcical events. Last night, however, the chief executive of the Scottish Football Association, Jim Farry, warned that rescheduling the trip in an already congested itinerary would not be simple.

While committing the SFA to abide by the decision, Farry said: "My view is that there will be a major difficulty in arranging this match within the timescale set. There is a possibility of a date in December, and one in February, but much could depend on the weather."

The saga began in earnest on the morning of the original game. Acting on representations from the Scots about the quality and positioning of the flood-

lights in the Kadriorg Stadium, the Fifa delegate was authorised to bring the kick-off forward by nearly four hours to 3pm local time. Estonia, whose players are part-timers, failed to turn up in protest. A fully kitted-out Scotland side were left to go through the motions of kicking off against non-existent opposition before the referee called a halt after three seconds.

Cast in the unfamiliar and uneasy role of a "big" country, Scotland originally believed they would be awarded a 3-0 walk-over victory. In the meantime, sympathy grew for the Estonians, one of Fifa's newer and poorer members, who submitted a 22-page document to the inquiry pleading their case. Disquiet was also expressed by other countries in the section.

The pugnacious Brown, mindful of the possibility that Scotland might have to return, had sought to play down ill-feeling towards Estonia. Nevertheless he was clearly annoyed at losing his midfield linchpin

stand 25th in Fifa's world rankings against Estonia's 112th place, and beat them twice in the last qualifying series). Having sent out a side in good faith a month ago, Craig Brown, the manager, will be forced to make an additional imposition on the goodwill of the clubs whose charges he effectively borrows.

David Will, the Brechin City director who sits on the organising committee, described McAllister as "the innocent victim". He added: "I'm resigned to the decision and obliged to accept it, though I can't say I'm entirely happy with it. The thing that does surprise me is that the match is going ahead in Tallinn and not at a neutral venue."

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sider the possibility of sanctions against the group favourites, Sweden. "It's been galling to hear other nations pronouncing on the issue," he said. "Gary will find it even more galling now that these protests have been successful."

In a statement explaining its decision, Fifa noted that Estonia had not shown up for the rearranged kick-off time, but accepted that there were "extenuating circumstances". Its disciplinary committee will con-

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3139, Friday 8 November

By Sparus



Thursday's Solution

BUDGETS INSPECTS

URGENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

SEQUEL EMISSION

STORM ACCORDION

EFES STEAM IRON HEART

ASIAN MAYFLOWER

SIBILANTS YURNS

TUY DI DIF

ERRONEOUS SWAYS

REGULATORY SYSTEMS

TECHNICAL SYSTEMS

ACROSS

- 1 Demonstrators want record to be amended (4-1-5)
- 3 Members of more than one union? (14)
- 5 Democrat associated with probation zone (4)
- 10 Primitive requiring ushers to look lively (6)
- 11 Go from Milk End to Stratford to get lethal weapon? (5)
- 13 Indicate agreement when told to go (6)
- 14 Players must meet press – that's for sure (4-4)
- 17 Break in continuity of action – third or fourth, perhaps? (8)
- 19 Writer of Greek verses disseminated in Paphos (6)
- 21 Tells of despicable creature captured by northern war-god (8)
- 23 Parliamentary holiday no time for swapping secrets (16)

- 2 Unloose retriever with shortened head and tail (4-4)
- 4 Island cricket club starts to insist on lively performance from players (9)
- 6 High potential for growth here in the city? (4-6)
- 8 Smuggler's funny horse (3-6)
- 10 New estate in which to make home (4)
- 12 Like Mozart aria, second in Entwistle to provide vehicle for American tenor (8)
- 14 Problem about small business (3)
- 15 In which a number of reds may be sunk? (4, 3)
- 16 A form of barrier on island initially seen as an abnormal feature (10)
- 18 Rector involved in split is to give sermon (6)
- 20 Stand-offish man holding a pair of spectacles (5)
- 22 Formidable woman, somewhat retrogressive (6)
- 24 Kan exercise classes in South Dakota (4)

12 Study displays offered by software package – hard work? (6-4)

15 Species typically presented in translation by geriatric Scot (9)

16 Roman road circumventing clean cut Spanish city (8)

18 Root not cultivated in part of Canada (7)

20 Rector involved in split is to give sermon (6)

22 Stand-offish man holding a pair of spectacles (5)

24 Kan exercise classes in South Dakota (4)

Wenger quick to deny rumours

Arsenal's new manager, Arsène Wenger, was yesterday forced into confronting a media pack on the steps of Highbury to deny that he was about to resign – or be sacked – because of rumours concerning his private life.

The 47-year-old Frenchman, who joined Arsenal on 30 September, was it was time to speak after being told by the Premiership leaders that the club had been besieged by inquiries from press and public.

"If something comes out that is wrong, I will attack," he said. "It is a serious matter if you can just create things that are not right. I am not aware of any allegations.

It was already too late. The culprit responsible for releasing the allegation has since personally apologised to Arsenal.

Wenger, perhaps wishing he had the protection of his own country's strict privacy laws, added: "I do not have to explain anything, but I am sad because Arsenal should be respected and so should I. If you want to know, I have a girlfriend in the south of France who I have lived with for three years. I am very disappointed with the attitude the media here takes."

Mysteriously, a leading bookmaker revealed that two weeks ago they began to be inundated with punters wanting to wager that his exit was imminent.

But then Talbot will do something he has not done for 26 years. A supporter of Brighton and Hove Albion, he has not missed a Seagulls game, home or away, in any competition – no, not even the Full Members' Cup – since 1970, but tomorrow he will join many hundreds of his fellow fans in Hove Park, across the road from the Goldstone Ground, in a boycott of the

match. Brighton's worst gate for a League fixture, 2,093 who watched them play Norwich City in 1929, seems likely to be lowered.

The boycott will mark the latest escalation in the bitter feud

between the club's supporters and its board, in particular Bill Archer, the chairman, and David Bellotti, his chief executive.

Brighton are bottom of the League and, following the sale of the ground to developers, without a home for next season. Most fans believe the club is sliding towards oblivion.

"I've been to just over 1,350 games in a row," Talbot said yesterday. "Sometimes I've had a bout of flu and felt pretty ill, but I've always made it. But we've got to the stage now where we

could not have a club next season. It's essential to get the people in charge out."

In a letter to Jimmy Case, Brighton's manager, and his players, the organisers of the boycott say that "we are all behind you and many people gathered outside will be cheering you on as usual. Our anger is directed solely at the board of directors, and we, the paying customers who love the club dearly, will not stand idly by as it is destroyed."

The decision to miss tomorrow's game will be a painful one for many fans, not least Graham Talbot. He will not be the only notable absentee, however. Bill Archer, Brighton's chairman, has not attended a match at the Goldstone for almost 12 months.

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